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DISCOURSES

ON

ASSURANCE,

AND

Christian Diligence.

DISCOURSES

ON

ASSURANCE



Christian Diligence.

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Fruit from Canaan ;
O R,
Fore-Tasts of Glory :
IN SEVERAL
DISCOURSES
O N
ASSURANCE.

WHEREIN

The *Nature, Excellency, and Usefulness* of
it are Open'd, for Comfort to the
Pious, and Encouragement of All.

WITH

A DISCOURSE on *Christian Diligence,*
shewing the Necessity of it on our part, for
the reaping Fruit so desirable as Assurance of
Glory.

By **SAMUEL ACTON.**

2 Pet. 10, 11. *Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure ; for so an Entrance shall be minister'd to you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

LONDON, Printed by J. Darby for John Baker
at Mercers-Chappel in Cheap-side. 1729.

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THE RECEIPT FROM TO BE KEPT AS A RECEIPT OF
THE RECEIPT FROM TO BE KEPT AS A RECEIPT OF

NOTED 1978. 8

STANDARD FORM NO. 64

[illegible]

*To the Churches of God
in Cheshire, Staf-
fordshire, Shrop-
shire, &c. To whom
Grace, Mercy, and
Peace be multiply'd.*

BRETHREN,

MY present Appearing in
Print, I can truly say, is
not from Ostentation and
Vain-glory, nor altogether from the

A 3.

Impor-

Importunity of those in whose Audience the Substance of the following Sermons were first deliver'd ; but to pay you a Debt, which, tho you knew not how to claim, I acknowledg to be due, viz, performing the best Service I cou'd, for your Encouragement and Comfort ; which I have soberly attempted in the following Tract : Wherein I have endeavour'd to lay open the Excellency of *Christian Assurance*, which enjoy'd, will prove very serviceable to keep you in a calm, steddy, and comfortable Frame under all Changes and Vicissitudes, with their several Events, whether prosperous or adverse, whilst in this mortal Body. Also I have labour'd to discover the way wherein this *Assurance* may be attain'd, which is *Diligence* in Virtue ; and in much Affection, according to my Measure, mov'd you by sundry Arguments, and weighty Considerations, to labour in the Use of Means for so happy a Purpose.

Glad

Glad I am of any Opportunity to signify the grateful Acknowledgment of my Soul for your Love, in striving together with and for me in your Prayers to God; whereby I firmly believe my Deliverance was further'd, from the Violence of them who rose up against me, and threaten'd my Ruin without cause. But since I have escap'd (as a Bird) the Snare of the Fowler, I cannot but warble forth the Praises of God, who has pleaded my Cause, and given me so pleasing an Issue, by restraining the Wrath, and turning away the Insults of those who wou'd have rejoic'd in an Opportunity to have triumph'd over me. To Him therefore must the Vow be perform'd, which strongly binds me more diligently to minister in the place where God by his Providence has set me: Also to employ some of my spare Hours in a more general way, for the Comfort and Service of his Church; and when I leave the

A 4

World,

World, to give a further Expression of my Good-will to her Interest, and desire that she may grow and flourish; the Birth whereof must attend my Departure.

In the mean time I have ventur'd to cast my Mite into the Treasury, amongst many whose Offerings and Performances in appearance are much more valuable. But tho it be not dress'd with Oratory, nor adorn'd with the Wisdom of Words, I dare aver that it proceeds from as willing a Mind, and Desire of furthering your Joy in the Lord, as any which ever fell under your Observation: and therefore I hope 'twill meet with a chearful and ready Acceptance amongst you, and be us'd to those Ends for which 'tis intended, viz. to engage you to be diligent in the whole Will of God, that you may appear such as have not receiv'd his Grace in vain; but by bringing forth the Fruits of Righteousness, may have strong Consolation thro Christ, and

Assu-

Affurance that your End shall be everlasting Life.

Brethren, I shall not here make mention of what I groundedly conclude to be praise-worthy in you, lest any shou'd interpret it Flattery rather than Praise; or suppose me guilty (in so doing) of reflecting on others, which is none of my Province. I shall therefore please myself in letting the World know my Privilege and your Honour, That I dare address without celebrating you.

Nor shall I pay Allegiance to a Custom usual in Epistles of this kind, while Men, to raise their Readers Estimation, fix a Preface at the head of their Works stuff'd with Encomiums thereof; which at best are many times only like a clean Entry, which leads into a dirty House. Nor shall I add to the Bulk of this Treatise, by making great Promises, which the Discourses were never intended to perform; but shall rather recommend 'em to you under this advantage,

The Dedication.

age, That I believe there's Argument enough in the Words which I have pitch'd on, with the Design advanced from 'em, to excite your sober and Christian Perusal of the following Lines: which done, then judg; and let none cavil with 'em before, for I know of nothing in 'em which can either hurt or justly offend any; if I did, I would either correct or cashier it. But to the end your Eyes may see that *Canaan's* Fruit is fair, and your Hearts be refresh'd in the Foretasts of Glory; let me intreat your careful Perseverance in these things.

First, That you earnestly solicit God thro the Lord Jesus Christ, for his Blessing on what you read; without which it may, and probably will, prove a seal'd Book unto you. O therefore pray for the Openings of the Spirit more and more; and that your Prayers may be effectual,

Secondly, Labour to put away Iniquity far from your Tabernacles; resolving,

The Dedication.

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resolving, by the Grace of God, to cleanse both Hearts and Hands, Affections and Conversions; otherwise, tho we make many Prayers, God will not hear us.

Besides, we know that the Men of this World, from the malignant Spirit that's in 'em, not only wait with Desire of your falling into scandalous Offences, for which they may speak Evil of you and the Truth you profess; but that they will also triumph in Satan's Victory, in contempt of Christian Charity, the Property of which is, *not to rejoice in Iniquity*. Be ye humbled therefore under the Sense of your own Sins and theirs, so shall ye be God's mark'd Ones in the day of Visitation.

Thirdly, Unweariedly endeavour to shew forth a practical Conformity to God and Christ in all Virtue and Goodness. A Holy Life is the best Comment of a clean Heart, and truest Expression of a pure Affection. Let your Emulation therefore

fore be to exceed each other in strict and sincere Piety, in confidence that Assurance of Glory will abundantly compensate all your Work and Labour, in Obedience to God; but a Breach of Loyalty towards him will produce no better Effects than broken Bones, and in horreur of Soul force us to cry out, between Hope and Despair, with the Psalmist, *Restore unto me the Joys of thy Salvation, that the Bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

Fourthly, Be kindly affection'd one towards another; live in Love, striving to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bonds of Peace; remembering that it's both a pleasant and profitable thing for Brethren to dwell together in Unity.

Fifthly, and *Lastly*, Pray for me, whether known or unknown in Person to you, that I may be kept faithful in my Lord's Work, and stedfast in his Covenant to my End; assuring your selves of this, that as

I stand in need of your Prayers, so I will not cease to pray, That God would crown you all with Myriads of his Heavenly Blessings, settling your Hearts in a firm Persuasion of the Certainty of your Calling and Election, by engaging your Diligence in all Duty, till he shall take you with the rest of his Elect to the Possession of an Inheritance incorruptible in his Heavenly Kingdom, where you shall be joyful in his Presence, and sing Hallelujahs unto God and the Lamb for ever and ever.

June 21. 1704.

S. ACTON.

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A
DISCOURSE
OF
ASSURANCE.

HEBREWS VI. xi.

*And we desire that every one of you do
shew the same Diligence, to the full
Assurance of Hope to the end.*

THAT which recommends the Excellency of any Religion to the Sons and Daughters of Men, is the Goodness of its Laws, and the Greatness of its Rewards. Herein the Christian Religion challenges all others, and is most worthy to be embrac'd both on the account of the Purity of its Precepts, and the incomparable Recompences which it bestows on them who are in reality devoted to the Practice of it; for *Solomon*
B speaking

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speaking of Wisdom (which is but another word for Religion) says, *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* She bestows Riches, gives Length of Days, advances to Honour, and is a Tree of Life to all that embrace and retain her, as *Prov. 3. 16, 17, 18.* A firm Belief whereof is enough to make us diligent in the Work of Religion and Godliness, especially since Diligence in Virtue will be succeeded in this Life with *Assurance* of Glory, as our Text informs us.

The Author of this Epistle is generally concluded to be *St. Paul*, who was a Man of strong Affection to those of his own Nation; and tho he was ordain'd and call'd to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles especially, yet to evidence the Reality of his Love to his Countrymen, for whose sake he cou'd (if possible) even have wish'd himself accurs'd from Christ, he directs this Epistle to the believing *Hebrews*, with design to convince and satisfy 'em that they were no Losers by their renouncing Judaism, and believing in Jesus: The Objections against which he obviates, in shewing 'em that the great Design of *Moses's* Law, and the whole Oeconomy of it, was to bring 'em to Christ, the Truth and Substance of all its Types and Shadows, which were to be us'd only till the End and Abrogation of that Constitution, viz. when Christ coming in the Flesh, and offering himself a Sacrifice for Sin, the Shadows would end and terminate in him, the Substance of 'em all. They pointed directly to, and reach'd no further than

Gal. 3. 24. him: for says *St. Paul*, *The Law is our School-*
 Rom. 10. 4. *master to bring us to Christ, who is the End of the*
Law for Righteousness to every one that believes.
 Now that the Christian Religion is preferable to the Jewish, the Apostle elegantly discovers,
 by

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by setting forth the transcendent Excellency of Christ, the Author and chief Minister of it.

First, In his Person and Nature; who therein far excels the blessed Angels, being made better than they: for He alone was the *Brightness* Heb. 1. 3, of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his 4. 5. Person. To Him only (and not to any of the Angels) God said, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

Secondly, In his Offices he no less excels *Moses*, who at best was but faithful as a *Servant*, Heb. 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. but Christ as a *Son*; and that in these four respects: (1.) In the Sacrifice which he offer'd. Heb. 10. Such was the Deficiency of those under the Law, that it was not possible for 'em to take away Sin, nor to make perfect those for whom they were offer'd. But there was Virtue and Merit in that Sacrifice which Christ offer'd; for by one Offering he himself perfected for ever them that are sanctify'd. Ver. 14. (2.) In his Intercession for us, which is no less superiour to that of the High Priests under the Law. They went once every Year into the Holy of Holys with the Blood of Bulls and Goats, and the like, to make Intercession for their own Sins, and for the Sins of the People. But he is enter'd into Heaven it self with his own Blood, which fills both Heaven and Earth with the sweet Odour and Savour of it. Arguments drawn from the Virtue and Merit of his Blood, are pleasing to God and profitable to Man; for thereby he has obtain'd *Eternal Redemption*, Heb. 9. 4. compar'd with the 12th Verse. (3.) In the Covenant which he settled and establish'd in his Blood, of which Covenant he is worthily stil'd the Mediator; and this Covenant is truly said to be a better Covenant, as it consists of better Precepts and better Promises, Chap. 8. 6. (4.) As

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the Rewards expresly propos'd by Christ do mightily exceed those which were plainly offer'd by the Law. The Law propos'd an earthly *Canaan*, a temporal Felicity and Happiness, giving but an obscure Account of a future State of Bliss; but the Gospel clearly represents to us a heavenly, a perfect Felicity, and everlasting Happiness: for Christ is *the Author of Eternal Salvation unto all who obey him*, Chap. 5. 9.

Now the Christian Religion being valuable above, and to be embrac'd before all others, as commanding nothing but what's necessary and beneficial to Men, and proposing so excellent a Reward to 'em; no wonder he puts 'em upon a strict and sincere Course in Christianity, stirring up the believing Jews to all Acts of Piety and Religious Exercises. *Let us leave*, says he, *the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, and go on to Perfection*; adding, *and this will we do if God permit*: which Resolution he takes up from a Sense of the lamentable State and wretched Condition of such, as having been admitted to the Enjoyment of Gospel-Grace and Privileges, afterwards have either walk'd unsutable to, or fallen from that Grace and Favour they were taken into. And that the State of such is very deplorable, appears not only from the Impossibility (or Difficulty at least) that there is in renewing such by Repentance, who sin so heinously against the Person and Grace of Christ; but also that in case such be not renew'd by Repentance, they will be inevitably *rejected of God*, and in the end cast into the Fire kindled by his flaming Wrath and Displeasure. There is no escaping, *if we neglect so great Salvation* as is purchas'd by Christ, and propos'd to us in the Gospel, to make us fruitful in Righteousness and Holiness. But if under the fructifying Influences

Ch. 6. 1, 2.

Ver. 3.

Ver. 4, 5, 6.

Heb. 2. 3.

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fluences of Gospel-Grace, we remain barren and unfruitful, it will not be long before he'll cut us down as cumbering the Ground, and cast us into the Fire: *For as the Earth which drinks in the Rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth Ver. 7, 8.*
Herbs meet for them by whom it is dress'd, receives Blessing from God; so that which bears Thorns and Briers is rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose End is to be burned. But tho it be thus with such as

basely desert Gospel-Grace and Service (the Belief whereof is enough to strike the Conscience with an Awe of offending, and to engage every thinking Person to labour diligently to bring forth Fruits answerable to the Grace of God bestow'd on him) yet on the contrary God will certainly be mindful of, and plentifully recompense with Salvation the Labour of such as are diligently employ'd in the Affairs of Religion, of which number the Apostle (at least in a Judgment of Charity) judges these *Hebrews* to be; and for their Encouragement and Comfort, thus addresses himself to 'em: *But, Beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that Ver. 9, 10.*
accompany Salvation, tho we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have shew'd towards his Name, in that ye have minister'd to his Saints, and do minister. Now since Salvation is propos'd as the End of our Christian Course, the Expectation thereof is surely sufficient to move us with our utmost might to abound in all Virtue and Goodness; and this is what the Apostle earnestly presses the believing *Hebrews* to in our Text: *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope to the End.* As if he had said, "As you have already express'd your Love to God by a diligent Attendance upon his Work and Service, be-
B 3 " lieving

A Discourse of Assurance.

“ believing that Virtue and Goodness will be suc-
 “ ceeded and crown’d with Glory and Happi-
 “ nefs; so we desire that you do not abate in
 “ your Love to God and his Saints, nor decline
 “ in Gospel-Work and Service, but that you
 “ put forth all your Strength, and double your
 “ Diligence, in expectation of reaping the bles-
 “ sed Fruit of Christian Industry, which is
 “ the Assurance of Hope, and at last the Frui-
 “ tion of Glory.

In the Words you have three Parts.

First, An earnest and affectionate Intreaty or Request: *And we desire every one of you.* Where-
 in observe, (1.) The Persons desiring, viz. St. Paul, an affectionate Servant of Christ and his Churches, personating all faithful Gospel-Ministers, in the term *We*. (2.) The usual Manner in which Gospel-Ministers address’d themselves to the Churches; and that is in a way of loving Requests and Intreatys, not exercising Lordship, or domineering over ’em, not burdening ’em with unreasonable Commands, or terrifying ’em with groundless Threatnings. Sometimes when they may justly command, they chuse to intreat; and when they are necessitated to mention the Terrors of the Lord, Philem. 8, ’tis to persuade Men. They do not so much
 9. expresse their Authority as their Love. Power may terrify, but endearing Intreatys will effectually draw and allure. (3.) The Persons thus intreated, who are the believing *Hebrews*, every one of ’em; and in them all true Believers, of what Rank or Quality, Sex or Nation soever.

Secondly, We have here the Matter of the Request, which is, that they *shew the same Diligence to the End*. Wherein ’tis plain, (1.) That Diligence.

Diligence is to be maintain'd. It's not enough that you have been diligent, but that you so continue. We must do well, and not grow weary of well-doing. (2.) Here's the Degree and Pitch to which we must be diligent, and that is, as diligent as ever. How industrious were we in our Endeavours to please God in the Day of our Espousals! How importunately do we seek God, when quicken'd by a Sense of our pressing Wants and Necessitys! How resolutely do we encounter Difficultys, when we have a clear Prospect and Hope of prevailing! And how diligently have we work'd, when by Faith we have taken a view of Salvation, the glorious Reward and Recompence of our Labour! Now to continue this Industry, is what I desire of you. And that it may appear the same in Measure, make it evident, shew it forth, express it in whatever you do, manifest it in all Places and in all Companys, by preventing Sin, and encouraging Virtue, in all Dutys to God, to your selves, and to all Men. But lest the Pitch whereto they had attain'd shou'd not be high enough, to yield 'em this desirable Fruit of Assurance; and to the end they may reap a full Crop of it for their Joy and Comfort, he sets before 'em the Labour and Diligence of the Saints of former Ages, and proposes to their Imitation the Example of such whose Diligence had render'd 'em successful, and possess'd 'em with the Good of Assurance here, and of Glory at last. Be not content in the Use of your present Diligence, nor in that which you have heretofore express'd; but if possible, double your Diligence, and come not behind any in Christian Industry: And this is that which we desire of every one of you, *That ye be not slothful, but Followers of them who thro Faith and Pa-* Gal. 6. 9. Ver. 12.

tience inherit the Promises. (3.) The Duration of Diligence, or an Account how long 'tis to continue, *viz. to the End*; that is, to the End of Life in this World. Tho these Terms signify Perfection and Consummation, by which the Apostle seems to allude to the End of a Race, which may agree with the following Words, compar'd with *Heb. 12. 1, 2, 3, &c.* and according to this Sense it imports their constant persevering, and intimates the Perfection to which they ought to aspire, and which they should attain: yet the Race will not be finish'd while they live; and therefore I say, the End signifies the End of Life. And that the Scripture by *End* often intends Death, appears
 Psal. 39. 4. by *David's* Prayer, that God would *make him to know his End*; by God's Wish, that *Israel* were
 Deut. 32. *wise, to consider their latter End*; and by *Balaam's*
 29. Request, to *die the Death of the Righteous, and*
 Numb. 23. *that his last End might be like his.* So soon as
 10. our Breath expires, and our Spirits take their flight from our pale and trembling Lips, our Christian Industry will end and terminate. We shall then be perfectly freed from Toil and Labour. Hence are they pronounc'd *Blessed who die in the Lord*; for they rest from their Labours,
 Rev. 14. &c. Then Assurance shall be turn'd into Vision, and Hope into a delightful Fruition. Then our Work shall cease (at least) to be a Burden, as is intimated by our Blessed Saviour's
 13. saying, *I must work while 'tis Day, for the Night comes when no Man can work.* The present Life is our only Time appointed for working; and who wou'd not be diligent therein, since Life at longest is but short, and nothing more uncertain than its Continuance? But tho Diligence will cease to be our Duty, when at Death we come to be Inhabitants of another Region; yet
 John 9. 4. till

till then 'twill remain our Duty. This the Wise Man enforces on us by the very same Argument, *viz.* that there is no such thing as Work and Diligence when we die. *Whatsoever thy Hand finds to do, do it with thy might:* the reason is; *For there is no Work, Device, Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest.* And no less than this our Blessed Lord shews by telling us, that it's *he who endures to the End* that shall be sav'd. 'Tis the End which crowns the Action. To cast away our Diligence whilst we live, will be to live without Assurance; for usually our Assurance is weaker or stronger, answerable to the Diligence we maintain. Therefore to quit Christian Diligence, will render us no less foolish than the Man who chuses to walk in the dark on the Tops of craggy Rocks and Mountains amidst dangerous Precipices, rather than to carry a Torch in his hand, by the Light whereof he might have order'd his Steps with safety. Nor does the Lord require Diligence any longer than we live, to entitle us to everlasting Glory; who says, *Be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.*

Ecclef. 9.

10.

Mat. 24.

13.

Rev. 2.10.

Thirdly, Here's an Account whereunto Diligence tends, and that is directly to Assurance. He that is most active, shall be best assur'd. Assurance is the certain Fruit of Diligence, and Christian Diligence shall be crown'd with Assurance of Happiness and Glory.

The Subject we shall treat of, is what the Apostle principally designs to promote in the Text, *viz.* That as Assurance of Happiness and Glory is a Blessing propos'd to excite Christians to be diligent, so it's out of all doubt that Christian Diligence is more than a vain and fruitless Speculation, as it shall be bless'd with Assurance

Doctrine.

A Discourse of Assurance.

Assurance here, and the Fruition of Glory hereafter. This Conclusion offers to our Consideration, (1.) The Duty recommended, *viz.* Diligence, all kinds of Diligence to the End, (2.) The Motive by which 'tis enforc'd, *viz.* the full Assurance of Hope.

I confess it may seem most proper that I should explain the Duty first, and then treat of the Reward, to induce Christians to practise the Duty. But I'll take liberty to treat of the last first, for divers Reasons, whereof one is, because I desire to let you see how excellent a thing Assurance of Glory is, that sutable Affections may be rais'd in your Souls towards it; and if that be happily effected, I shall reckon my Work more than half done, and you not only almost, but altogether persuaded to practise a Duty propos'd, in the prospect and view of so great a Happiness.

Now then 'tis certain that Assurance of Heaven and Glory is a Blessing propos'd to excite Christians to Diligence. Were it not so, to what purpose is so great a Happiness as future Glory promis'd? I know no other End of Gospel-Promises, than to engage us with Diligence to obey Gospel-Precepts, that we may take in the Comfort of a promis'd Glory in the Hope and Assurance of it. Neither do I imagine that any can discourage Christian Diligence, unless to the great prejudice of a Holy Life, and Indulgence of Sloth and Impiety, things which the Lord hates. But if any say, our bare Opinion carries no Authority with it, he that affirms must prove; I proceed.

As Life gives Motion, so 'tis Hope and Expectation which quickens Diligence. Take away Hope, and you clip the Wings of Diligence, discourage Industry, and supersede all honest

honest Endeavors. As long as *Peter* walk'd in the View of his Lord, and in the Strength of Faith, he nimbly trip'd upon the Face of the Waters. The Word of Christ, and the Desire of his Company, made him willing to venture; but when the Storm was great, and Waves interpos'd between him and his Saviour, by which his Sight of Christ was interrupted, his Hope flag'd, Fear took place, and he *began to sink*. Whilst the Sailors were in Hope, they work'd and toil'd: but when all Hope was taken away, their Hands grew weak, their Spirits sank, and their Hearts wax'd faint within 'em; who, instead of carrying *Paul* a Prisoner to *Rome*, stood in need of his ministring to recover 'em from that Feebleness, which discourag'd Diligence, meet to be us'd by Men in so desperate a Condition as theirs was. When *Israel's Hope was lost*, they had no more heart to Work and Duty, than so many dead Men have to Motion and Activity. When all Prospect of Good disappear'd, and their Hope perish'd, they were as so many *dry Bones*; and they say, *We are cut off for our Parts*. If Hope vanishes, the Heart breaks.

But on the other hand, a propos'd Good challenges and calls for Diligence, and Desire and Hope lead to Industry: For, after Man by Sin had made a Forfeiture of all Good, God graciously propos'd to him the Blessing of Bread; wherein are intended all those good things which are necessary for Man's Accommodation, during his short and uncertain Life in this World. But tho God is so liberal to so unworthy a Wretch, yet he never intended this Provision for him, but with design to engage his Diligence in the Pursuit of it, as is most plain from what the Lord says, *In the Sweat of thy*

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thy Face shall thou eat Bread. If any say, those Words are part of that just Sentence which God pronounc'd against *Adam*. 'tis true; yet we may as truly say, he gives us a Prophetical Account, that of his Goodness and Benignity he will give Man Bread; and also that Man by Toil and Labour, even to Sweating, shall obtain his Bread. It was one great part of his Felicity in Paradise, that his Provision was prepar'd and made ready to his hand, without his contributing thereto by Toil and Labour; but 'tis not so now: Yet 'tis admirable Mercy that God tenders him the Enjoyment of all necessary Blessings, on his diligent Endeavor to obtain 'em, in the use of those means by which he has determin'd we shall come at 'em, which are by Working and Sweating.

And as for those who are indulg'd with the Blessings of this Life on easier Terms than Toil and Labour (either by the plentiful Inheritances of their Ancestors transmitted to 'em, or otherwise) they may remember, that tho by so good Providence they are freed from Care, yet their Estates cost some of their Predecessors many Thoughts and Cares, much Pain and Labour: So that such are more deeply engag'd to Divine Goodness, who enjoy the Blessings of this Life on Terms so easy, and stand firmly oblig'd to exert and imploy their utmost Diligence, to express their Love and Thankfulness to God their Benefactor; who, as he has freed 'em from the Toil of getting their Bread before they eat it, has thereby put into their hands the better opportunity to serve and glorify him. Were you in Want, as many are, the Prospect of Gaining would, in all probability, make you very industrious. And this our blessed Saviour teaches in the Parable, where he is speaking

speaking of a Man who lost one Sheep out of a hundred, his Desire of finding sends him to seek it: And the poor Woman, who lost her Piece of Silver, was encourag'd by her Hope of finding to seek it, and that with Diligence.

God's Promise of *Canaan* to *Israel* was not with design to indulge their Sloth, and encourage 'em to sit down short of the Good Land, as if they had nothing to do; but to stir 'em up to Diligence, and to quicken Industry, in performing Dutys, fighting their Enemys, and removing Obstacles out of their way, which might hinder their Entrance into, and Possession of it. Therefore the *Danite* Spys, after they had found out *Laish*, and discover'd the real Goodness of the Country, return'd to their Tribe at *Zorah* and *Eshraol*, and finding 'em idle (a Posture very much unbecoming a People under their Circumstances and Expectation) first relate to 'em the Goodness of the Land: We have seen it, say they, and behold it is so, there is no want of any thing that is good in the Earth. And thus proposing a very desirable Inheritance to 'em, they expect 'em to act as becomes Men under such an Inducement; *Arise, that ye may go up against 'em. Are ye still? Judg. 18. Be not slothful to go in and possess the Land. A-9, 10.* gain, the Certainty of this is evident, in that if *Israel*, after they were enter'd into the good Land to possess it, should behave themselves perversly, neglect their Duty towards their God, and by turning Idolaters, or becoming otherwise vile and wicked, carry it unworthy of so great Goodness as was bestow'd on 'em; then the Lord in Judgment would not fail to cast 'em out of that good Land, and disinherit 'em: for tho *Israel* should beget Children and *Dent. 4. Childrens Children, and remain long in the Land, 25.*

Yer. 26.

Jer. 9.

25, 26.

Deut. 8.

19, 20.

if they corrupt themselves and make a graven Image, or the Likeness of any thing (to bow down to it) and do Evil in the Sight of the Lord their God, to provoke him to Anger; then they shall utterly and quickly perish from off the good Land. Their Tranquillity should be cut short, they shall not prolong their Days, but the Lord would destroy 'em. If a circumcis'd and chosen Israelite will be no more diligent to please God under the Ties of his great Goodness, than an Heathen and idolatrous Canaanite is, he will in Displeasure destroy the one as well as the other. If these forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other Gods, and serve them, the Lord testifies that they shall surely perish; even as the Nations which the Lord destroy'd before their Face, so shall they perish, because they would not be obedient to the Voice of the Lord their God.

And if the Intendment of God, in giving Israel an earthly Canaan, was to make 'em obedient, diligent in his Service, and careful to please him; much more is the Celestial Canaan, the Felicity of that blessed Region, propos'd with design that we should shew forth our utmost Diligence to make it sure. As 'tis the greatest Good, so 'twill not be secur'd by the sleepy Prayers, idle Wishes, and faint Endeavors of slothful Persons; but by Diligence in Virtue, a violent encountering all Enemys, a resolute opposing and breaking thro all interposing Difficultys. Of all Interests that of future Glory is most to be regarded, even that which St. Peter above all others recommends to us: Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give all Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure; for so an Entrance shall be ministred abundantly unto you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; telling 'em, he will not be unmindful

2 Pet. 1.

10, &c.

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mindful to put 'em in remembrance of these things, meaning the things before spoken of, viz. living and growing in Faith, Virtue, Knowledg, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness and Charity.

Also our blessed Saviour, the best of Preachers, having a very critical Question propounded to him, viz. *Are there few that shall be* Luke 13. *sav'd?* did not satisfy the Curiosity of the 23.

Querist, in telling him of any Number, more or less, of them who shall be sav'd, which concerns not the Knowledg of Mortals; but he puts him, together with them who heard him, upon the use of Means necessary to their being some of that Number. Therefore his Reply is, *Strive to enter in at the strait Gate; for many, I* Ver. 24.

say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. Strive as in an Agony; a careless seeking will not do, therefore be diligent. The very same Design our Lord would promote, in distributing to Men the vast Treasures of his Grace, mention'd in the Parable of the Talents: When he had deliver'd 'em to his own 14, &c.

Servants, he takes his Journey, and after a while returns to take an account of the Use and Advantage which they had made of 'em; and such as had diligently improv'd 'em he own'd, commended and rewarded, receiving 'em with a *WELL DONE good and faithful Servants,* V. 21, 22.

enter into the Joy of your Lord: But as for the Servant who had been only careful of his Master's Talent, to keep it that he might have to render his Lord his own at his Coming (which is more than many inconsiderate Persons in our Days think of) yet for want of Diligence to use and improve the same, how did he lie open to his Lord's Censure and just Displeasure; who, because of his Idleness, stil'd him, *A*

sloughful

- V. 26, 30. *slothful and wicked Servant*, adding, *Bind him Hand and Foot, and cast him into outer Darkness.* Men have their Hands at liberty now, but then they will be bound for ever. Were these things duly consider'd, sure there would not be such lavish, profuse and prodigal abusing and wasting our Lord's Goods, as there is at this day in the World. What Condemnation and Misery will they lie open to, who come so far short of the slothful Servant, as to seem careful only how they may sinfully make away their Lord's Treasure, applying their Time and Strength, as the Generality of Men do, in pursuing the Lusts and Pleasures of this World; as if their Wisdom and Happiness consisted in kicking more strongly against their Lord, by how much the more kind and generous he is in his Goodness towards 'em? If such Men fall into Misery, they will then be convinc'd, with every slothful Professor of Religion, that their Ruin is chargeable on, and wholly owing to their want of Diligence in the Dutys of Religion and Godliness; and then 'twill be too late to mend Matters which are amiss. It remains only for such to lie down in Hell. But Oh! who can lie down in the devouring
- Isa. 33. 14. *Flames? Who can dwell with everlasting Burnings?* But tho Wickedness and Unprofitableness will thus end to the Terror of such as will not be reform'd; yet as Christ will come again for such Purposes as are beforemention'd, so for the Comfort and Encouragement of the truly pious and industrious. The Apostle Peter speaks forth his Confidence of *a new Heaven* and *a new Earth* to be reveal'd then; and in assurance hereof he presses the Saints to Diligence, *That they may be found of him without Spot and blameless.* Thus, without multiplying instances
- 2 Pet. 3.
13.
- Vcr. 14.

stances of this kind, from what has been said, and the Nature of the thing, 'tis sufficiently evident, that Assurance of Happiness and Glory is propos'd to excite Christians to be diligent.

I now proceed to shew you,

First, What this Assurance is, that we may not be mistaken in our Notion about it; and that it is attainable by Christians.

Secondly, What the Grounds are from which it arises, that if we want it, we may know where to seek it.

Thirdly, What the Propertys of it are, that such as think they have it may by the most certain Rules know whether it be of the right kind.

Fourthly, I'll then give some Arguments to move such as want it to seek it, and induce such as have it to prize and keep it, as also some Directions; and then I'll proceed to the Duty it self.

I begin with shewing, *First*, What this Assurance is, and that 'tis attainable by Christians. This Assurance is variously stil'd by the Holy Ghost, wherewith the sacred Penmen were inspir'd. Sometimes 'tis call'd the Assurance of Faith; *Let us draw near* (says the Apostle) *in Heb. 10. full Assurance of Faith.* Faith does not only apprehend the transcendent Excellency of Glory, as being *the Evidence of Things not seen*; but it *Heb. 11. 1.* believes the Truth and Certainty of its Being, and is therefore call'd *the Substance of Things hop'd for.* Sometimes 'tis stil'd *the Assurance of Col. 2. 2.* Knowledg or *Understanding.* The Soul of Man is a reasonable and understanding Being. What Faith apprehends of Heaven and Happiness, falls under the View and Cognizance of the Soul: It takes in an Understanding of it, and

The Nature of Assurance.

the Fruit of this Knowledg is Assurance, tho'tis not a Knowledg of Vision but of Faith only. And sometimes 'tis stil'd *the full Assurance of Hope*, as in the Text. The Soul apprehending by Faith the Excellency of a State of Glory, from the Discoverys made in the Sacred Scriptures, and being perswaded of its Right and Title thereunto from its Conformity to God in Holiness, and the Evidence of his Spirit, waits diligently and patiently to be put into the Possession of it: And so from this waiting Frame, it may be call'd the Assurance of Hope.

But more particularly this Assurance is,
1. A firm Persuasion of the Mind of the Truth and Certainty of Things hop'd and look'd for. 'Tis the Settlement of a pious Soul, in an unshaken Confidence and stedfast Belief of the Reality of unseen Things, and the Certainty of Heaven, with the blessed Provisions there made to feast, and eternally solace the sincerely Godly, who alone must be the Inhabitants of that blessed Region. Assurance, I say, is a firm and stedfast Belief of Heaven and Glory, accompany'd with a solid and clear Persuasion of our Right to it, thro Faith in, and Conformity to, Christ Jesus; quietly waiting for the same, in a diligent doing and patient suffering the whole Will of God.

If once the Devil can persuade us to believe there is no God, that Heaven is but a Fiction, and the Happiness and Glory of it is Fable and Romance; the Sinews of our Diligence will be cut, and Hope will be laid a gasping and languishing: For what can move us to use Diligence to obtain a thing, which in our Judgment has no Existence, but what, as the Atheist suggests, a melancholy Fit, a crazy Brain, or

a disturb'd Fancy give it? And 'tis to be wish'd there were no more of that sort of Men than is generally thought; for Atheism is a more common tho' secret Principle in the Hearts of Men, than they imagine. A Man may profess to be a Worshipper of God, and yet be guilty of Atheism, of which there are divers Degrees: and in some of 'em we may be guilty. A Man is not only chargeable with Atheism who denies the Being of God, which is the most gross and absolute Atheism, a Degree to which I scarce believe any Man can possibly come, so as openly and publickly to assert, as the Sentiment of his Soul, that there is no God.

David tells us, *The Fool has said in his Heart, there is no God*: He has said it in his Heart, not with his Tongue; he hopes there is none, and wishes there may be none. He entertains not such a sense of God in his Heart as might curb and restrain him from his voluptuous and sensual Course, yet he does not publickly assert and openly affirm there is no God: But as he is guilty who denies the Being, even so is he who denies the Providence of God, whereby he inspects and looks into the Hearts and Actions of Men, and governs all Persons and Things as he pleases; or who endeavours to rend from him any of his blessed Attributes, denying him to be what the Excellency of his Nature declares him to be. What say you of them who deny his Holiness, and think he has pleasure in Iniquity, and is like them whose only Pleasure lies in committing the same? Some such there were, of whom *David* speaks (*Psal.* 50. 21.) and are there not many now who dance after their Pipe? Or what shall we judg of them who deny the Omniscience of God, doing those things in the dark with the Antients of *Israel*,

Ezek. 8.
22.

in the Chambers of their Imagery, of which they would be asham'd if Men saw them. And the Cause of all these their Abominations is their Atheism; for, say they, *The Lord sees us not, the Lord has forsaken the Earth.*

1 Cor. 15.
32.

Now as many deny the Being of God in his Holiness and other Perfections, so there are many who believe Heaven and the Happiness of it to be but a Dream, the Result of our own deluded Fancys; of which sort, beside the Atheists, are they who deny the Resurrection of the Dead, whereof there are many in this day, and such as are mighty Pretenders to Religion too. And that which is consequent thereto, is not only a Denial of a future State in Heaven and Glory, but Liberty to gratify our sensual Appetites, and a living as we list: for thus the Apostle argues, *If there be no Resurrection, let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die; q. d. Let us walk after our own Counsels, act according to our own Dictates, pursue our Pleasures, and take our Fill of a voluptuous Life; let us live as the Epicure does, and never deny our selves any thing for the sake of Virtue, or on the account of a future Reward: It's all one, we die and go to the Dust, and there we remain. As there is no account to be made after Death, so there is no Hell to punish the Wicked, nor Heaven to reward the Virtuous; there's no Happiness to be enjoy'd beyond the Satisfaction of this present Life; we shall not be sensible of any thing after Death. This and such like is the Language of them who say, the Dead rise not, and are thereupon void and destitute of all Hope and Assurance of future Glory.*

2. As 'tis a stable Belief of the Certainty, so 'tis a strong and confident Expectation of the
Glory

Glory and Happiness reserv'd in Heaven for us. 'Tis the Settlement of a believing Soul in a patient waiting, to enjoy the Good hop'd for. As it believes there is such a Place as Heaven and a State of Glory, so the Soul is confident that it's a Place prepar'd, an Inheritance reserv'd for him, and therefore is always *looking for it*, as St. Jude speaks, with earnest Desire of it; Jude 21. which Desire is exprest in such Terms as these: Oh when will my Beloved come! My Soul longs for thee! Make hast, my Beloved! Skip away Psal. 63. 1. like the Roe or young Hart upon the Mountain of Spices. Be more swift than the Chariots of *Aminadab*. Oh, when shall the sable Curtain be drawn, and my Soul settled in the eternal View of thy Face and Glory! When shall I be taken into the Joys of thy Presence, be lodg'd in thy Embraces, and satisfy'd in reaping the Fruits of everlasting Love? This is all my Desire, says an assur'd Soul. And as his Desire is thus earnest, so he patiently waits with an humble Confidence and firm Hope of obtaining it at last: *For we know*, says St. Paul, 2 Cor. 5. 1. *that we have a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*; and that there is *an Inheritance incorruptible, reserv'd for us*: And not only so, but in the mean while we shall have all our Wants supply'd, according to that of the Apostle, *My God shall supply all your Wants*. From him we shall have Grace to relieve and help us in every time of need, who will withhold no good thing, whether of Grace or Glory, but will guide us with his Counsel, till he receive us to Glory. This I conceive to be Assurance of Hope, and is indeed the highest Pitch of Assurance which we are capable of in this World.

Assurance attainable.

Now that this Assurance is attainable by us, if the Fault be not our own, will appear beyond contradiction, in considering,

1. The Goodness of God in giving us the Scriptures, which are a perfect Draught of his own Mind, a Character of Himself, and a mighty Expression of his Love to us. Were it not for these sacred Lines, we should be poring in the dark even at Noonday, and never come to any certainty; neither should we be able to make any true Judgment of our own State and Condition, nor distinguish rightly between things which differ. By them the Simple are enlightned, the Ignorant are instructed, the Erroneous are convinc'd, the Wavering are settled, the Disconsolate are comforted: By them Error is detected, Doubts resolv'd, Fears remov'd, Truth display'd, Faith strengthen'd, and Hope confirm'd. Were it not for this sacred Touchstone of the Scriptures, we might easily be impos'd on by the Devil, and those who lie in wait to deceive. We might take Counters for Gold, Confidence for Hope, and a carnal Presumption for Christian Assurance; for obtaining which God in pure Kindness has given us his Scriptures, *that we might believe the Truth, and in believing might have Eternal Life*: and not only Eternal Life hereafter, but the Comfort of it here in the Assurance of it.
- John 20. 31. *For, as Paul tells us, Whatsoever Things were written aforetime were written for our Learning, that we thro Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope. And says our Lord Jesus,*
- John 15. 11. *These Things have I spoken to you, that my Joy might remain in you. To which the Apostle*
- 1 Joh. 1. 4. *John adds, These Things we write unto you, that*
- 2 Joh. 12. *your Joy might be full. St. Paul pronounces*
- Gal. 6. 16. *Peace to as many as walk according to this Rule;*
and

and advises *Timothy*, and in him every serious Christian, to remain stedfast in the Study of the Scriptures, as they are *given by Inspiration* 2 Tim. 3. of God, and are also serviceable to all good 15—17. purposes, and able to furnish us to every good Work, and *make us wise to Salvation*. And says one of the Fathers, There is a mighty Fulness in the Scriptures.

2. Many have attain'd this Assurance, which shews the possibility of the thing; what has been, may be. I know not that any were ever blest with a truer Ground of Assurance, no not those who saw Christ in the Flesh, who heard his Doctrine, and beheld his Miracles, than they have who enjoy the Grace of his Gospel; which proposes Salvation as the End of Faith, and puts us upon looking for it with good old *Jacob*, who says, *I have waited for thy Salvation, O Lord*. Perhaps you'll say, he had good reason for it; for as his Age and Impotency might oblige him to seek it, so he had a Promise of it; for as a Prince he had and should prevail with God and Man. And this Promise fill'd him with Expectation, and caus'd him in Confidence and Assurance to wait for it. I add therefore, the same thing is also evident from what *Job* says, whose Words can be nothing else but a Stream flowing from this Assurance of Hope; *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that I shall see him for my self*. Tho his Eyes must sink and rot in their Holes, tho he must fall into Corruption, and Worms eat and destroy his Body; yet, without Hesitation or Scruple, he utters the firm Persuasion of his Soul, that he shall see his Saviour to his everlasting Joy: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c.* Nor is it less plain from what *David* says, which is of the very same piece with this Christian Assurance;

*Pf. 17. 15. As for me I shall behold thy Face in Righteousness,
I shall be satisfy'd when I awake with thy Likeness.*

Moreover St. Paul, inferior to none of these Worthys, declares not only his own Hope and Confidence, but also that of the Saints in his day; affirming, that tho Troubles and Afflictions attend 'em whilst they are in the Body,

2 Cor. 5. 1. They have a House and Building of God, not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens. The Knowledg of this so strongly ingages 'em in the Service of God, that they endeavor to glorify him both by Life and Death; not valuing, tho they be made Sacrifices for the Testimony

*Rom. 8. 17. of Jesus, being assur'd that those who suffer
2 Tim. 2. with him shall also reign with him.* The Belief of this fills 'em with Courage and Magnanimity, and renders 'em more firm and stable under the most shaking Trials and battering Persecutions:

Rom. 8. 38, 39. for he elsewhere says, I am persuaded that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This Persuasion in the Apostle, I conceive, arises not so much from the Impossibility of their Separation from the Divine Favour, as from their own Experience, not only of the Sharpness of those Persecutions which they suffer'd, and the daily Troubles and Afflictions which attended 'em; but also of the Power of God, strengthen-

Rom. 8. 36. ing and making 'em more than Conquerors: For, says he, we are kill'd all the day long, and accounted as Sheep for the Slaughter; that is, the things which we daily suffer are as cruel as Death it self, yet our Faith remains unshaken, our Hope is firm and lively, and our Hearts are confident and fully persuaded, that as none

of

of the things which we have suffer'd have mov'd us, so neither one thing nor another ever will; for his *Grace is sufficient for us.*

2 Cor. 12,

3. 'Tis attainable, since it's the Duty of every Believer to press after it and labour for it; which argues that our coming at it is possible. An Impossibility of the thing would discourage and destroy Endeavours, and lead us to conclude that all pains are lost which we take to obtain that which is unattainable. But God never makes that the Duty of his Children, which can't be done either by the Strength they have receiv'd, or by the Strength they have in Christ, in whom, as the Apostle says, *I can do all things*; and among other things, this is made the Duty of Christians: *Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give diligence to make your Calling and Election sure.* But if this Assurance be not attainable, when we have us'd our utmost Diligence, we lose our labour; and if so, how vain was it for the Apostle to make this Address and affectionate Request to them in our Text, to shew Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope to the End.

2Pet. 1. 10

Having thus shewn the Nature and Attainableness of it, we proceed to the *second* thing, viz. To shew you what the *Grounds* are from which this Christian Assurance arises; that if we want it, we may know where to seek it. This I shall do both *Negatively* and *Affirmatively*. There are, I confess, many Springs whence something flows which carries a mighty Resemblance to this Christian Assurance; but all is not Gold that glisters. A carnal and groundless Confidence is at best but counterfeit Coin. As a bad Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit, nor a muddy Fountain send forth clear Streams, so other good Effects come not from an ill Cause.

False Grounds of Assurance.

Cause. I shall therefore shew you now, what are *not* the true Grounds whence this Christian Persuasion and Holy Confidence arises.

More generally: It arises not from a wealthy Estate and prosperous Condition; not from Crowns and Kingdoms, Honour and Dignitys, Peace and Plenty, standing right in the eyes of Men, and the good Opinion of others. These things and many more a Man may have in this World, and yet, with the Rich Man, be miserable in the other, and lift up his Eyes in Hell; *Eccles. 9. 1* for *no Man knows either Good or Evil by the things that are before him.*

More particularly: It springs not from the following things, *viz.* (1.) Knowledg and Understanding. *That the Soul be without Knowledg* (as the Wise Man says) *is not good*; but Knowledg of it self is insufficient. 'Tis not possible for any on Earth to gain Notions, so sublime and clear, of the Nature and Excellencys of God, as the fallen Angels had, by their being plac'd so near him, yea in the view of his Divine Excellency and Glory; yet this immediate and transcendent Knowledg of theirs could yield 'em no Assurance of continuing in the favour of God, or Security from falling, and becoming Devils, as they have found by sad Experience. The Knowledg of God is not always accompany'd with a Conversation suited to the Nature and Will of God, who is the most worthy Object of our Study and Knowledg. And when a Man's Knowledg and Practice thwart and contradict each other, what is he better than a Devil in human Shape? For tho a Man says he knows God, and in Works denies him, he is, whilst he so continues, but an abominable Reprobate. Knowledg, I confess, may render a Man acceptable with, and profitable to
Men;

Men; and yet not be sufficient to raise him above the Rank of a base and mean Person.

What tho a Man had as much Knowledg as is requisite to make him a Physician or Philosopher, eminent for understanding human Bodys, and able to lay open the Mysterys of Nature? What if he could by Astronomical Speculations give an exact Relation of the Nature and Motion of Heavenly Bodys, and a perfect Account and clear Demonstration of all things which human Reason in its highest Improvement is capable of reaching to? Yea, what if a Man had as much Knowledg in the Scriptures as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had, and much more, so that he could give a plain and full Exposition of all the obscure Texts therein, and discourse profoundly of the Mysterys of Grace? Yea, what if he had the Gift of Prophecy, and Knowledg of things to come, and could make large and eminent Discoverys of the excellent Glory reserv'd? This, I confess, (as Wind swells a Bladder) may cause him to swell to a mighty bigness in his own eyes, and those of others; and yet this Knowledg may by his Abuse of it prove but a Snare to pervert him, as that of the Prince of *Babylon* did.

Isa. 47. 10.

The *Scribes* and Wise Men among the *Jews* boasted of their Wisdom, saying, *We are wise*, *Jer. 8. 7,* *and the Law of the Lord is with us*; but *8. 9* from the Judgment which God himself makes of 'em, they were more brutish than the Beasts *Isa. 1. 3.* of the Field, and in point of Understanding inferiour to the Fowls of the Air. Yea, what tho a Man had all Knowledg, *i. e.* as compleat as is attainable by human Creatures, and could untie the Knots and unfold the Mysterys which are in the things of Nature, Grace, and Glory; yet if this Knowledg be alone without

Charity,

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Charity, 'twill (as the Apostle says) *profit us nothing.*

Again, suppose a Man has only natural Knowledg, which consists in Speculations floating in the Head, and attain'd by Art and Study; then tho he be a mighty Proficient in those Sciences which he has affected to study; yet he
 1 Cor. 2. 14 may be ignorant of the *things of the Spirit of God*, and discern no more of 'em than a blind Man can of Colours. These are beheld with another Eye than that wherewith the natural Man sees, even by the Illumination of the Spirit of God in the Soul. By this the most illiterate can see such Excellency in Christ and Spiritual Things, as the Wise and Learned are many times ignorant of; as appears by what the *Pharisees* say on occasion of the Officers entertaining some good Opinion of Christ: *What*
 Joh. 7. 47, (say they) *are you also deceiv'd? Have any of*
 48, 49. *the Rulers or Pharisees believ'd on him? But this People who know not the Law are curs'd.*

Nicodemus, a Master in Israel, and beyond contradiction a Man of great Wisdom and Knowledg, was with respect to the Necessity of Regeneration as blind as a Bat, a perfect Stranger to that without which he could not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, as appears by his Question propounded to our Lord; *Can*
 John 3. 1, *a Man be born when he is old? Can he enter*
 2, 3, 4. *the second time into his Mother's Womb, and be born?* All Knowledg which transforms not into the Likeness of God, and leads not to obey him, is worth nothing, and will be no more valu'd or rely'd on (if ever we come to know the things of the Spirit of God, to see the Excellency that is in Christ and in Holiness) than those among the *Ephesians* who had us'd curious Arts, did, after they believ'd, value their

their Books, which they willingly and openly burnt. Tho Men had Notions as sublime as those of Angels, yet they may prove but Devils in the end.

(2.) Religious Professions and high Pretences for God and Christ, are not a Ground sufficient to build this Assurance of Hope on. Were this enough, who in *England* would not be furnish'd with this choice Pearl of Christian Assurance? Who is there that believes not in God? Who makes not a seemingly devout and religious Profession of Jesus Christ, that he liv'd a divine and holy Life, that he suffer'd under *Pontius Pilate*, that he was crucify'd, dead, and bury'd for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification? But notwithstanding all this and more, what a vast number have Damnation in plain Characters written (as it were) on their very Foreheads, because of their Apostacys, Blasphemys, and abounding Iniquitys? Their Professions may give 'em a Name to live, whilst at the same time they are truly dead in Trespasses and Sins, with the Church of *Sardis*, of whom our Blessed Saviour from Heaven testifies, that they had *a Name to live, but were dead.* Eph. 2. 2. Rev. 3. 1.

A Profession of Christ without Conformity to him, may justly make way for that cutting Interrogation of his, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Few will stick at Lip-Service; to compliment and speak excellently of the Name and Dignity of Christ, is so cheap a Sacrifice, that many will very cheerfully offer this to him, who will not take pains to mortify one Lust for his Honour. Without great care a Christian Profession will betray us into Soul-Deception, and make us think better of our selves than we ought to think, even *Laodicea*-like, that we are rich and want nothing,

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Mat. 11.
23.

thing, tho perhaps we are *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.* And tho we may be rais'd in our Expectation as high as Heaven by a Profession of Christ, it may only tend to make our Fall the greater, our tumbling into the bottomless Pit the more violent; and cause us to sink deeper into the Miserys of Hell, where *Capernaum* was to be lodg'd notwithstanding their eminent Advantages, unless a speedy Repentance and Reformation prevented.

(3.) Outward and partial Reformations are not a sufficient Ground for this Christian Assurance. I confess, to reform our Lives, and to amend our Manners, is good and necessary. And that so excellent a Work may be carry'd on in this our Nation with Success and to a good degree, let Heaven strengthen the Hands of our Sovereign Lady the Queen, and sweetly dispose all subordinate Magistrates under her, to contribute all they can by an exemplary Life, expressing a just and due Indignation against all Profaneness and Immorality, by a zealous Distribution of Justice, faithfully executing all good Laws made and provided for that purpose. At whose door will all Outrages and open Impietys lie, since had due care been taken for the Punishment of such Practices, they had generally speaking never been attempted, but at theirs who bear the Sword in vain? And 'twere well if there were not too many such in City and Country, to whose Neglects 'tis wholly owing that so little Good is effected by our wholesom Laws, and that the Iniquity of contemptuous Men appears so openly in our Age. What pity is it that this is no more industriously endeavour'd, since it has been so often and earnestly recommended from the Throne, not only by our late King *William*, whose Memory must

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must be sweet to all good Men, as his Zeal for Virtue has erected a Pillar which will perpetuate his Name and Honour ; but also by her present Majesty, whom God long preserve ? With what Zeal and Affection has She time after time, in her Royal Proclamations, breath'd forth her pious Desires that Sin may be banish'd these Lands, which has been the Reproach, and without Repentance may be the Ruin of our Nation ?

Yet I say, outward Reformations, tho necessary, are not enough ; because a Man may sometimes rectify what's amiss from Necessity and carnal Inducements, and not from Inclination and Choice. There may still remain the same Propensity as ever, tho the Ability to Sin be abated, and the Commission of it forborn. In some cases Sin may leave us before we leave Sin ; as the Weakness attending Old Age may render a Man more chaste : The Distress of Poverty, or a small Estate, may take a Man off from riotous Living, and sinful Excesses in Eating and Drinking. Again, temporal Interest may sometimes oblige to Reformation. A Courtier, rather than forfeit his Honour and lose his Prince's Favour, will stop Sin from an open appearance, tho it may still keep the Regency in the Soul. Again, Fear of Punishment, as well as a Desire of being accounted Religious, may oblige to Reformation, and so maintain a sort of Sanctity, when the Soul may be full of nothing but crawling and filthy Vermin, defiling Lusts, or at least whilst it is void and destitute of that Purity and Holiness which is necessary to Happiness. If we want inward Sanctity under the greatest shews of it, we shall appear in our best Dress with the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, to be but painted Sepulchers,

and

and such as seek only our Conveniency, in rectifying the Extravagances of a debauch'd and wicked Life: And under the greatest Advantages which can accrue from an outward Reformation, effected by any Inducement short of sincere Love to God and Holiness, we may with the foolish Virgins be excluded the Kingdom of Heaven, against whom the Door was shut, not so much for their evil Life, as want of Oil in their Vessels, i. e. Grace in their Hearts. Nor,

(4.) Is the Enjoyment of great Privileges a sufficient Ground of this Security and Christian Confidence; tho Men are very apt to build on this bottom, and hence to entertain a strong Presumption. Such are like *Israel*, who tho the Lord had rejected them as reprobate Silver, and deliver'd 'em up to his Judgments for their Sins; yet for all this, because his Name was upon 'em, they verily imagin'd themselves to be the Darlings of Heaven, and in the midst of their Rebellions cry out, *The Temple of the Lord are we*. And the *Jews* in our Saviour's time, tho their open and gross Wickedness shew'd 'em to be of their Father the Devil, and a Generation of Vipers; whence the Baptist wills 'em to go and bring forth fruits meet for, or worthy of, *Repentance*, otherwise the Baptism which they came for would no way avail 'em: yet how did they persuade themselves that all was well because *Abraham was their Father*, tho Christ demands of 'em how they could escape the Damnation of Hell!

This sure is enough to satisfy all considerate Persons, how poor a Privilege 'tis to be born of believing Parents, and that it can yield 'em no Security from Punishment and Misery, if they prove wicked in their own Persons, and neglect

lect to walk in the ways of their virtuous Ancestors. Even *Simon Magus*, by virtue of his believing and being baptiz'd, obtain'd the Privilege of Communion with the Saints in Church-Fellowship, till his Wickedness was discover'd, and he was rejected for the same. His Privilege could not rescue him from the Guilt, nor yield him any Security from the Punishment of his Sin, to the Dominion whereof he was yet subject, as *St. Peter* testifies, saying, *I perceive that thou art in the Gall of Bitterness and in the Bond of Iniquity.* Acts 8.23.

Babylon, who from the Greatness of her Privileges, Immunitys and Royaltys, grows proud and haughty, concludes her self past all danger of Trouble and Misery, saying, *I sit as a Queen, and am no Widow, and shall see no Sor-* Rev. 18. 7, 8.
row; not considering that strong is the Lord who judges her, and notwithstanding her seeming Security arising from her great and flourishing Prosperity, will in a moment bring upon her *Widowhood and Loss of Children.* When God Isa. 47. 2; multiplies her Plagues and burns her with Fire, 9. the Kings of the Earth who have committed Fornication with her, and her Merchants who traded in the Trumpery of her Superstitious and Idolatrous Worship, shall weep and wail, fear and tremble, seeing the Smoke of her Torment. A further and pregnant Proof of this you have in the seven Churches of *Asia*, whose Privileges were many and great; yet by reason of their declining in Love to God and Goodness, he draws up and exhibits a Charge against five of 'em (if I mistake not) letting 'em know that unless they *repent and do their first Works,* Rev. 2. 5. abandon their Sloth, and rise from their Lukewarmness to a more fervent and vigorous Exercise of Religion and Godliness, he wou'd re-

Rev. 3.16. *move the Candlestick from amongst 'em, and spue 'em out of his mouth.*

Inferiour to none of these, are those of whom our Lord spoke under the Denomination of foolish Virgins, mention'd above, who as well as the wise had Lamps, and waited for the coming of the Bridegroom; by whom he points at such Professors of Christianity (and they are not a few) as take up their Satisfaction in a bare Enjoyment of Gospel-Privileges, without endeavouring after a renew'd Frame of Soul, and a Conversation becoming the Gospel and futable to their Profession; which being wanting, our Lord assures us, Professions and Privileges will not avail: for the Bridegroom being come, and enter'd the Marriage-Chamber with the Wise (as the Parable mentions) tho the Foolish intreated for Admission, yet notwithstanding their most earnest Importunity they were rejected by Christ, who says, *Verily I know you not*, i. e. I know you not so as to approve and admit you. Thus 'tis evident great Privileges are not the Spring from which flows this Assurance of Hope. Nor,

(5.) Is a multiplying of external Services, and abounding in Religious Dutys, a Ground sufficient to furnish the Soul with this Christian Hope and Confidence, if void of sincere Love to God. The Jews in their day were a People bless'd above all others with the Word and Ordinances of God, and seem'd zealous to express their Conformity to him and his Law, manifesting their Reverence to him by Religious Gestures, painful Services, and expensive Sacrifices; notwithstanding which, their Hearts being destitute of all sincere Respect for him, they were meet to be accounted, what our Lord

Mat. 23. *fittly compares 'em to, Painted Sepulchers, full of Rottennes*

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Rottenness and dead Mens Bones. Like these are too many in our days, who express the Life and Strength of their Devotion to, and Reverence of God, only by external Modes and Services, as entring bare into the Places of Religious Worship, beautifying and adorning 'em with much Cost; and when they approach near the Altar, what Bowing and Cringing, what Elevation of Hands and Eyes may be observ'd in their formal (not to say superstitious) Services; all which are pretended to express their venerable and religious Regard of God! But follow and trace some of 'em in their Conversations, and you may easily discern that Looseness and Profaneness; which is sufficient to convince one, notwithstanding all their Appearances, that they are so far from worshipping God, that some of 'em can scarce be suppos'd to believe that there is a God.

If you observe others, who would be counted of a more refin'd Rank, you shall often find 'em on their knees, seemingly most devout, and frequent in their Attendance on the Ministration of the Word and Ordinances, the very Picture of them of whom the Lord thus speaks, *They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways* Isa. 58. 2. *as a Nation that did Righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinances of their God: They ask of me the Ordinances of Justice, and take delight in approaching unto God.* Yea, sometimes you may find 'em giving vent to more than ordinary Passions; as if their Souls were under some strange Transport, and their Hearts melted into Tears of Love. Observe 'em (as some have done) and you may discern that sighing and sobbing, that crying and lamenting, that wringing of Hands, and lifting up of Eyes; as might argue 'em to be intirely devoted to God,

D 2

and

and resolv'd no more to live an earthly and sensual Life: Yet follow many of these also in the Course of their Lives, and you may discover that Earthliness, Remissness, Drunkenness and Debauchery, as give just occasion to impartial Persons to suspect their zealous Fits and pious Appearances to be nothing but Arch-Hypocrisy and Dissimulation.

The greatest Shew, without Reality, will never avail us. Therefore the Lord by the Prophet endeavours to take the People of Israel off from this, as that which will turn to no account; saying, *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? I am full of the Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts. Bring no more vain Oblations; Incense is an Abomination. Your New Moons, your Sabbaths, and solemn Meetings are Iniquity; my Soul hates them. And when ye spread forth your Hands, I will hide my Face; and when ye make many Prayers, I will not hear.* Strange Expressions of a tender and compassionate God! who had formerly made his Arm bare for their Redemption, and in his Goodness dispens'd his Laws to be observ'd under the Encouragement of many gracious Promises. Strange I say 'tis, that he should dislike and reject what before he had commanded and requir'd at their hands! But the Reason follows, *Your Hands are full of Blood.* He values his own Institutions, when solemniz'd by a People destitute of good Affections and pious Dispositions, no more than he does the killing of a Man, the cutting off a Dog's Neck, the offering of Swines Flesh, and blessing of an Idol, things which he must needs abhor and detest. Worshipping of God does him not so much Honour, as the Denial of Obedience on other accounts does him Dishonour, as reflecting

Isa. i. 11,
to 17.

fecting Disparagement on his Omniscience and Holiness. Yea, this is to declare him an indigent and purblind Deity, who stands in need of our Services, and is worthy of no better from us than a senseless Idol. Therefore let all our Addresses to God be with Seriousness of Spirit and Decency of Behaviour, suitable to him who takes cognizance of, and calls for the one as well as the other. Nor,

(6.) And lastly, Is Faith by it self a Ground sufficient to furnish the Christian with this Assurance of Hope. I confess St. Paul says, *That Rom. 3.28. a Man is justify'd by Faith*, and not by Works; to which we put our Seal. But on the other hand St. James, who spake by the same unerring Spirit, says, *That a Man is justify'd Jam. 2.24. by Works, and not by Faith only*. Now certainly what is alledg'd on both hands is true, nor do the Apostles in the least thwart and contradict each other: yea, they are perfectly agreed that Abraham's Works did evidence the Truth and Certainty of Abraham's Faith. There can be no great difficulty in reconciling such as only seemingly oppose each other, which yet is more than the Apostles do in what they say of the Sufficiency or Insufficiency of Faith to Justification. Now to remove all seeming Disagreement from between 'em is easy, if we'll consider that St. Paul had to do with the Jews, who rejected Christ as the Object of Faith, and rested wholly on the Works of the Law. Therefore that he might remove 'em from that false and dangerous Bottom, and convince 'em of the Necessity of Faith, he tells 'em that a Man is justify'd by Faith, and not by the Works of the Law, i. e. not by the Works of the Law exclusive of Faith in Christ. St. James had to do with a People quite of another Temper,

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who were all for Faith, and none for Works. Whether they were the *Gnosticks* in their first Rise with whom this Controversy happen'd, I will not determine; but probably the Question in debate was, Whether a Man is justify'd by Faith or by Works? They in opposition to the Apostle say, by Faith only and not by Works: *q. d.* If we believe in Christ, 'tis sufficient; we may live as we list, our Nonconformity to him in practical Holiness can no way hinder our Justification, nor hazard our Right and Title to Salvation.

Now St. *James* undertakes to prove the contrary; even that a Man is justify'd by Works, and not by Faith only. And this he demonstrates, in shewing that *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful was justify'd by his Works; and evincing, by a parity of Reason, the Insignificancy of Faith without Works; affirming, that as the

Ver. 21. the Faithful was justify'd by his Works; and evincing, by a parity of Reason, the Insignificancy of Faith without Works; affirming, that as the

Ver. 24. Body is dead without the Spirit, so is Faith without Works. As 'tis not by Works exclusive of Faith in Christ, so 'tis not by Faith exclusive of Works. Not by Faith only without Gospel-Obedience; not by a barren fruitless Faith: Whence he demands of the Man who says he has Faith without Works, whether it can be imagin'd that Faith can save him? No, it can't be groundedly suppos'd.

Ver. 14. And of the very same mind is the Apostle

Paul; who, when he comes to describe this justifying Faith, tells us 'tis a working Faith, Gal. 5. 6. a Faith which works by Love, a Faith which purifies the Heart. It discovers the Amiability of Christ to the Soul, inflames it with Love to him, and immediately leads to the keeping of his Commandments, without which all is but

1 Cor. 7. Fancy; for, says he, Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the Commandments

mandments of God. Yea, he is perfectly one with St. James, and is so far from believing that Faith justifies exclusive of Gospel-Obedience, that he expressly tells us, *Tho a Man had all Faith, and have not Charity, it profiteth him nothing.* The Faith of a Swearer, Drunkard, Whoremonger, or of any un sanctify'd Person, will never bring him to Heaven; neither can Faith alone work in him any solid and comfortable Persuasion of the Goodness of his State; since our Lord tells us without scruple, that none are the *Children of Abraham* but such as *do the Works of Abraham.* Thus 'tis evident, that 'tis neither Faith without Works, nor Works without Faith, but both together, which furnish the Soul with Assurance. 1 Cor. 13.2
Joh. 8.39.

'Tis Faith which justifies a Sinner in the account of God, but Good Works justify us in the sight of Men, and are the most certain Evidence of it to our own Consciences. And true Faith can no more subsist in the Soul without producing the Fruit of Good Works, than a living Principle can without Motion; to prove which is the whole Aim of St. James, and to prevent a spreading Heresy entertain'd so early by loose and carnal Professors, who greatly infested the Christian Borders, viz. That if a Man believ'd in Christ, it was enough, tho he liv'd as he list'd. How safely then may we conclude them extremely mistaken, who tell us a Man is justify'd without either Faith or Works? but that I leave as mere Enthusiasm. From the things above-mention'd indeed a carnal Confidence and bold Presumption may arise, but a Christian Assurance will never flow from 'em; that is, from these things singly and alone, which tho they are not to be excluded, but may be necessary, yet they are not sufficient, as has been evidenc'd.

True Grounds of Assurance.

I now proceed to assign the true Grounds of this Christian Assurance in the Soul; which is a conforming of our selves, under the influence of Gospel-Grace, in Affection and Conversation, to the Mind and Will of God reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures. In these only we have the lively Characters of a Christian given us; and the true way of attaining this Assurance of Hope, is a serious Examination, and comparing our State with the Rules and Marks which the Holy Ghost has given us there for that purpose. For my part, I know no other way whereby a Man can come at this valuable Blessing; which if we may judg of the Cause by the Effect, must have a Divine and Heavenly Original, even the Grace of God propos'd in the Promises of the Gospel to all who yield Obedience to the Precepts thereof, trusting in Christ and his perfect Righteousness for the Supply of their Defects. Now for your Help, and the Furtherance of your Joy, I shall collect and assign five or six things descriptive of a State of Grace; whereby the pious Soul may be furnish'd with, and may rise high in Assurance. And that which I judg most worthy to be plac'd in the front of 'em, is,

1. The Love and Kindness of God apprehended by the Soul. As the Grace and Love of God is the great Source, and only Fountain, whence Salvation with all our Comfort and Happiness flows; so his Kindness apprehended in a constant Experience of the Blessings of his Favour descending upon us, is that which furnishes a Man with a firm Persuasion and comfortable Assurance of the Safety and Goodness of his State. The Love of God is the first Cause and Spring, giving motion to all the Wheels, which happily move in the noble Work

of Man's Redemption, the great Design of which was to make Reconciliation by Jesus Christ, that we might be made the Objects of Divine Love, which is a Happiness indeed. But tho this be a Happiness which admits of no comparison, yet our present Comfort consists in our Soul's apprehending his Love, and knowing our selves taken into the Favour of God; which will guard us against all the Inconveniences of this present Life, will recover us from all our Faintings, and set us within the Views of Glory hop'd for.

On the other hand, a Sense of God's Displeasure marching out against a Person, will fill him with racking Fears and Perplexitys, not knowing where to take Sanctuary, or find Refuge, to secure himself from the Batterys of that terrible Storm. To behold the Majesty of Heaven frowning, our Consciences stricken with a lively Sense of our manifold Transgressions, and our Souls apprehending his Indignation and Wrath, just ready to be pour'd out upon us! This will trouble the Thoughts and change the Countenance, loosen our fastest Tackle, set us a trembling, and cause our Hearts to die within us, as the Hand-writing on the Wall did King *Belshazzar's*. His Royaltys and Dignitys, his Provisions and Plenty, his jovial and jocund Dan. 5. 6. Company, his Delights and Pleasures, with all other Advantages which a sensual and voluptuous Course afforded, could yield him no Security from Fear and Distress, when sensible that the flying Arrows of God's Vengeance were level'd at him, and his Fury marching out against him. The terrible Thundrings of God's tremendous Power above us, the fearful Shaking of the Earth beneath us, is not so astonishing as a Sense of the Divine Displeasure towards

towards us. Who can express the Tremblings, the Convulsions, the Horrour and Amazement of a Person apprehending himself to be Fuel, on which the Sparks of God's eternal Vengeance
 Pl. 76. 7. are ready to kindle! *If once he be angry, as the Psalmist interrogates, who can stand before him? Therefore that Holy Man prays, that God would not correct him in Wrath, nor chasten him*
 38. 1. *in his sore Displeasure.*

But the Displeasure of God is not more shocking and terrible to a Soul under the Sense of it, than the Comfort and Confidence is great which flows from apprehending his Love and Favour. All the Excellencies of this World, compar'd with Divine Love, fall infinitely short of it; and that in the Judgment of the wise King Solomon, who tells us, That *his Love*
 Cant. 1. 2. *is better than Wine.* The most enlivening and cheering Wine can't exhilarate and raise our Spirits like the Sense of God's Love to us. This will settle the Heart in a steady Quietness, 'twill keep us from Fear and Fainting under the most amazing Revolutions of Providence: Yea, this will fill us with Courage and Fortitude, when the Hearts of others die within 'em. This will keep our Heads above the rolling Billows of raging and restless Waters, while others like Lead sink to the bottom thereof. A Sense of God's Love will carry us comfortably thro all the Changes of the present Life, and assure the Soul that all things shall issue for the best, how cross and counter soever they move in appearance. The Breathings of his Love will fill the Sails of our Affections, and its sweet and gentle Gales will waft us safely into our desir'd Port and Haven.

Eccl. 16. If God in kindness rais'd us out of our low Estate, wherein we were fitly compar'd to a wretched

wretched Infant, whom no Eye pity'd, nor Hand help'd beside his own, what will he not do for us if we are his Belov'd? I confess the bare Notion of God's Love to Man is a Ground of Hope to all; but 'tis his Love apprehended which fills the Soul with Assurance, as *Eliphaz* suggests in his Advice, *Acquaint now thy self with him, and be at Peace, and thereby Good shall come unto thee.* And *St. Paul* earnestly prays for the Church at *Ephesus*, that God wou'd grant 'em to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Height, Eph. 3, and Depth, and Breadth, and Length of the Love 18, 19. of God, and to know or apprehend the Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge. Now the very End why the Apostle thus prays, is, that they may be confirm'd and strengthen'd, made more Ver. 16. firm and steddy in Hope, being rooted and ground- Ver. 17. ded in Love; and that they might be fill'd with all Ver. 19. the Fulness of God. From both which Places 'tis evident, that a firm Persuasion and strong Confidence or Assurance, proceeds from the Love of God apprehended by the Soul.

But before I leave this Head, let us be caution'd against the Mistake which many Enthusiastick People and some sanguine Sinners have run into, who have endeavor'd to render their Minds easy, by persuading themselves that God loves 'em, and takes great Delight in 'em; and the Pleasure they take in this groundless Persuasion, they call the Sense of God's Love, from which they derive their Comfort and Hope, tho in reality 'tis grounded only on their own Fancy, which will wretchedly deceive 'em. I say, have a care of such Delusions, and conclude nothing by false and deceitful Mediums. And if any inquire how they may get a real Sense of this Love of God, which is excellent, useful and advantageous to our Comfort

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Comfort and Happiness; let such seriously do these three things, and they can't miss of a comfortable Sense and Apprehension of it.

First, Love God above all. As he is infinitely worthy in himself of thy Love, so esteem and account him. Hate and leave Sin. Bestow on him, who is Love it self, thy most cordial and sovereign Affection; and he will make thee a very generous Return of Love, to the Settlement of thy Soul in a firm Persuasion of it, since he says, *I love them who love me, and they who seek me early shall find me.*

Prov. 8.
37.

Secondly, Improve well that Sense of his Love which you have. Talents improv'd increase, and are multiply'd. Love exprest in doing his Will is the most sure and certain way of knowing our selves to be belov'd of him: For this you have Christ's Warrant, who says, *He that has my Commandments, and does 'em, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me shall be lov'd of my Father, and I will love him, and my Father will love him, and manifest himself unto him.*

John 14.
21, 23.

Thirdly, As above all you must love and please God, so you must go out in your utmost Desires after him. The Spouse, who had the fullest Intimations of Divine Love, exprest the most ardent Desires of enjoying her Beloved in such Breathings as these: *Tell me, O thou whom my Soul loves, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy Flocks to rest at Noon; for why should I be as one that turns aside from the Flocks of thy Companions? And, Make hast, my Beloved, and be thou like the Roe or young Hart upon the Mountain of Spices.* Persons belov'd of each other, when absent, are impatient of their Return; much more is a gracious Soul vehement in her Desires after the Presence and Company of her Saviour. And 'tis certain, if we thirst after nothing

Cant. 1.7.

Cam. 8.14.

nothing more than the Enjoyment of God, in the Communications of his Favour, he will in due time *give us the Desires of our Heart*: yea, *Psal. 37. 4.* he will abundantly satisfy us here with Assurance, and hereafter with the full Enjoyment of his everlasting Love, which is sufficiently intimated in the Scriptures of Truth. The

Second Ground of this Assurance is, Likeness to God, being born after his Image, and resembling him as Children do their Father. Man's great Loss in the Fall was that of God's Image in Righteousness, Immortality and Holiness; and there's no possibility of his being reinstated in Happiness, till he be renew'd, and has the Divine Image impress'd upon him. Therefore our Blessed Saviour has made Regeneration necessary to all them who have sin'd in their own Persons, without which there is no entring into Heaven, and consequently no Assurance to be attain'd. For, says he, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a Man be born again of Water, and the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* In this new Birth (which imports no more than a sincere Repentance and turning to God) a Man is restor'd to the Likeness of God in Disposition and Conversation: For as earthly and fleshly Fathers beget Children in their own Form and Likeness, so does God our spiritual and heavenly Father.

In this Work of Regeneration there's a defacing of the Image of the Old Man, and a restoring of the Image of the New, as the Apostle expresses it: *Put off concerning the former Conversation the Old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts; and put on the New Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness: where by putting off the old Man, the Apostle plainly means, that we should* *Eph. 4. 22, 24.*

Col. 3. 8,
&c.

Rom. 8. 17.

1 Pet. 1.
15. Luke
6. 36. Mat.
5. 48.

should abandon our former Conversations; wherein we walk'd not according to God; that we lay aside all sinful Habits and vicious Practices, with Resolution to return no more to 'em; even as a Man puts off an old filthy ragged Garment (to which in his Metaphor he alludes) with a firm purpose to put it on no more: which is more evident from the parallel Place. And by putting on the *new Man*, is intended primarily a putting on Christ by Faith, and then to walk in him, improving the Residue of our Lives in Virtue and Goodness, coming up, as near as 'tis possible for frail and mortal Men, to our great Precedent in Righteousness and true Holiness, by the Practice whereof we appear to be created after or in the Image of God. And to resemble him therein is the great distinguishing Character, which only can declare us in Truth to be the Children of God, and comfortably assure us, that if *Children*, we are then *Heirs of God*, and *Joint-Heirs with Christ* of an incorruptible Inheritance. Therefore let us consider what Likeness there is to God in the Disposition of our Souls, what resemblance we bear to him in his imitable Attributes. Are we *Holy as God is Holy, Merciful as God is Merciful, Perfect as God is Perfect*?

If there be not in the Course of our Lives some Displays of those Excellencys, which are the natural Property of, and shine forth with all Perfection in our Heavenly Father, there can be no true Ground of Hope that we are his Children, nor are we any way entitled to the Provision and Protection of his Bounty and Goodness; whereas on the other hand, if we appear to be his Children, by our Likeness to him, we may rest confident, that in his Pa-
ternal

ternal Kindness he will overlook our Weaknesses, pardon our daily Miscarriages, protect us from Dangers, sustain us under Pressures, sanctify Misfortunes to us, recover us from Mishaps, deliver us from Trouble, guide us in all our Ways, and crown us with Success in all our just and lawful Enterprizes; Yea, he will assure us of our Right to the bountiful Provision which he has made for his in this World, and that which is to come.

Now there are four things common to all who are born of God, by which we may judge of our Relation to him. The

1. Is Love. It's natural for Children to love their Father. He is an unnatural Child who does not; and tho there may be some such in Nature, 'tis certain there are no such in Grace: For as St. John says, *Every one who is born of God, loves God; and he that loveth not, knows not God, for God is Love.* 1 John 4. 7, 8.

2. Such as are born of God do not sin. Not that I would be here understood to assert a Perfection from Sin, since we have the Confession of the Saints of old, concurring with our own Experience, that *there is no Man who sins not.* To say we sin not at all, is to deceive our selves, and to make God a Liar. But they who are born of God do not sin, as other Men do, with Choice, Delight and Allowance, habitually and customarily; but their Sins are attended with Reluctance, Remorse and Repentance. And where a Person sins only thro Weakness, God is so gracious as not to account or impute Sin, but is ready to forgive. In this sense 'tis that the Apostle says, *He that is born of God doth not commit Sin; and adds, He cannot sin;* that is, he can't by Choice, and with liking, from a happy present Incapacity he is in thereto.

3. Such

True Grounds of Assurance.

Ezek. 16.
2.

2 Cor. 8. 5.

3. Such as are born of God don't only break off all Confederacy with Sin, but commit themselves to be rul'd and govern'd by him. And what's more equitable than this? As he has a Right to us, we should become his by Dedication and solemn Surrender of our selves unto him. Thus *Israel* did, as the Lord testifies, *I enter'd into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine*; and so *St. Paul* witnesses of the Saints at *Corinth*, that they first gave up themselves to God, and then to the Church, according to his Will. His we are from all manner of Considerations, which can entitle him to any Person or Thing under the Sun.

Therefore not to yield up our selves to his Service and Honour, is a great Wrong; and to engage in the Service of his avow'd Enemys as well as our own, *i. e.* the Flesh, the World, and the Devil, will not only be high Imprudence, but the most manifest Injury which we can possibly offer to the ever-blessed God. And sure I am, were we so treacherously dealt with by our Children or Servants, we should count 'em most base and unworthy, and scarce be restrain'd from severely punishing such Treason and Rebellion. Therefore let's consider whether we have actually and with free Consent given up our selves to be the Lord's, to do his Will, and to suffer his Pleasure? If it be not so, 'tis high time 'twere; and the sooner 'tis done the better 'twill be. Our Evidences for Heaven may then be clear, and our Assurance strong.

4. Another undoubted Sign of our being born of God, is our living to him in the Practice of Righteousness and Godliness. A Diabolical Life is inconsistent with a renew'd Frame. Righteousness is the Element in which every
new-

new-born Soul breathes, and Godliness is his Trade and Employment. In this the Apostle John is most express, both as to the Affirmative and Negative: *Whoever does not Righteousness is not of God; but ye know that every one who does Righteousness is born of God.* Now if the Compass of our Soul stands right in this particular, designing in all we do to live to God; then as the Goodness of our Life will be a clear Evidence of the Life of Godliness in us, so our living to God will comfortably assure us, that whether living or dying we are the Lord's. The

1 John 3.
10.
Ch. 2. 29.

Rom. 14. 8.

Third Ground from which this Assurance flows, is, sincere Love to the Children of God; and 'tis no difficult matter to know who these are, since the Apostle so plainly distinguishes between them and others, by the great and infallible Character of practical Holiness: for in this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; *He that doth not Righteousness, is not of God.*

1 John 3.
10.

Love is a Christian Debt due to all Men living, whether Good or Bad, Friends or Enemies, from the Sovereign Pleasure of our great Lawgiver, and the Examples propos'd to us by God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. The Command is, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self:* And our blessed Saviour, the Mirror of Kindness, says, *Love your Enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use and persecute you.* How difficult the due Observance of this Precept may be, I will not say, but I am sure it's possible; and 'tis great Pity there is not a more general Endeavor us'd by all who are call'd Christians, to live in the Practice of it. There's no Law which discovers more eminently the true and real Excellency of the

Mat. 22.
39.
Ch. 5. 44.

Christian Religion, nor binds Men more strongly to be beneficial one to another in this World, nor any thing which more clearly argues us to be the Children of that God, who does good to the Unthankful and Evil; whose exemplary Kindness our Lord Jesus mentions as a Motive to induce us to imitate him, and to appear to be the Children of our Heavenly Father, who

Ver. 45. *makes his Sun to shine on the Evil and the Good, and sends Rain on the Just and on the Unjust.*

But tho the Laws of our Religion firmly and perpetually bind us to love our Enemys, so as to be no ways injurious to 'em, but wish 'em well, and do 'em good according to our Power on all occasions; yet we more especially stand oblig'd to love the Brethren, as they are born of the same Father, belong to the same Family, and are Heirs of the same Grace and Glory as we our selves: and not only so, but as Sufferers with us in all our Tribulations. The Love of God and our Neighbor is the Sum of the old Commandment, but the Love of our

John 13. Brethren is the Sum of the new; *A new Com-*
 34. *mandment, says Christ, I give unto you, that ye love one another.*

And what's more necessary than our doing this, contributing all we can to the Benefit and Comfort of each other? since 'tis most certain we shall be the Objects of the World's Hatred and Scorn, whose Enmity to the Children of God will carry 'em out now as well as in Ages past, with Prejudice and Malice, to calumniate and traduce, to injure and oppress, yea to spoil and ruin 'em; on which very Consideration he requires his Disciples to love one another. This

John 15. is also necessary, as 'twill yield us a strong As-
 17—21. *surance and firm Persuasion of Mind, that we*
 1 John 3. *are the Offspring of God, and redeem'd from the*
 11, 12. *World,*

World, who after a while shall inhabit the glorious Mansions prepar'd for us in our Father's House.

This will evidence to us the Greatness of our Dignity by Grace, and the Certainty of our Happiness; whereas he who does not *Righteousness is not of God; nor he who loves not his Brother.* ^{1 John 3. 10.} Beloved, says the Apostle, *let us love one another,* ^{1 Joh. 4. 7.} for Love is of God; and every one who loves is born of God, and knows God. He further adds, *He who loves his Brother abides in the Light, and there is no occasion of Stumbling (or Scandal) in him; but he who hates (or loves not) his Brother, abides in Darkness, and walks in Darkness.* ^{1 John 2. 10, 11.} Such are at a mighty Loss, not knowing how to order their Steps with Safety, being every moment liable to stumble and fall into Sin and Misery: But on the other hand, says he, *We know that we have pass'd from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren; he who loves not his Brother abides in Death.* ^{1 John 3. 14.}

To love the Brethren so as to sympathize with 'em, is to be like God, who speaking of Israel, says, *In all their Afflictions I was afflicted.* ^{Isa. 63. 9.} To rejoice with them who rejoice, and weep with them who weep, is a Frame very well becoming a Child of God, and what will manifest him to partake of the Divine Nature in some Conformity to the blessed Jesus; who was so sensible of the Persecutions rais'd against his Church and People, that he complains of 'em as if directly level'd at his own Person, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Whereas to live voluptuously, sensually and carelessly in the midst of our Abundance, whilst our Brethren at Home or Abroad are in a suffering State, is that which is very displeasing, and may cut short our own Tranquillity. This Temper the Lord greatly blam'd in Israel, who put far a-

Amos 6. *may the evil Day, and caus'd the Seat of Violence*
 3, 4, 5, 6. *to come near; who lay upon Beds of Ivory, and*
stretch'd themselves upon their Couches; who eat
Lambs out of the Flock, and Calves out of the Stall;
chanced to the Sound of the Vials, drank Wine in
Bowls, and anointed themselves with the chiefest of
the Ointments, but griev'd not for the Afflictions
of Joseph.

To love the Brethren so as to delight in their
 Society, chuse 'em for our Companions, and
 take pleasure in their Converse, because gra-
 cious, tho poor and indigent; to become Com-
 panions of them who fear the Lord, as David
 did, and to delight in 'em as the most excellent
 of the Earth; to love 'em so as to account
 'em interested in what we have, and to commu-
 nicate of our Abundance for their Relief and
 Comfort; will argue us to be such as have put on
 those Bowels of Mercy which become the Elect of
 God, and assure us of an Interest in the Mercy
 and Liberality of God; such as he will pro-
 vide for here, and gloriously reward with the
 Recompence of eternal Life hereafter: for we
 know we are pass'd from Death to Life, because
 we love the Brethren. A

Fourth Ground from which this Assurance of
 Hope arises, is the Testimony of God to us
 and his Witness in us. Such as have God tes-
 tifying to 'em the Goodness of their State
 may rest confident and comfortable in the cer-
 tainty of it. If our Prince assures us by his
 Word of his Favour and Good Will, shall we
 question it? No. Much less then will we ques-
 tion the Love and Favour of God, when he
 gives us his Word for it. Now there is
 threefold Testimony or Witness of God, which
 is very conducive to settle the pious Man in
 comfortable Assurance of the Truth and Cer-
 tainty

taint

tainty of Things, to which he bears Testimony.

Some have imagin'd a fourth, which I'll name first, viz. a Vocal Testimony, when God testifys with an audible Voice. Thus he spake with Adam in the Garden, and testify'd to Israel from Mount Sinai, when he gave forth his Law. Thus he witness'd to the Sonship of Christ at his Baptism and Transfiguration, saying, *This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleas'd.* And thus Christ testify'd to the Penitent Thief on the Cross, upon his believing in him as the only Messiah, *To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* Now whatever God ratifies by this kind of Evidence, we may rest firmly persuaded of the Truth of it. We cannot once bring it in question, without arraig- ing the Truth and Veracity of God at our Bar.

But tho God has vouchsaf'd to speak after this manner with Man in former Ages, 'tis not to be expected he shou'd thus testify now, since he has given us a standing Law in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour, which shall endure to the World's End. 'Tis therefore to be desir'd that there were none in our days, as well as in Ages past, so disingenuous and desperate as to suspect and call in question the very Being of God, and the Truth of his Testimony to Man; also that there were none so inconsiderate as to refuse Satisfaction (which some have done under Temptations or the Power of Melancholy) from any other Ground than the audible Testimony and Voice of God from Heaven. Let the Voice of God in the Gospel and by his Ministers say what it will, 'tis all too little to satisfy such a Soul of the Goodness of its Condition; whenas if God would speak with an audible Voice, and testify thereof unto 'em, they seem willing to be persuaded and satisfy'd. But

whoever cherishes such a Desire as this, let 'em know,

1. That it's unreasonable to require so glorious a Majesty to leave the Order, and step aside from the settled ways of his Grace and Providence, by doing something above what is ordinary, to quiet and satisfy a Creature so worthless, peevish, and hard to be pleas'd. How like are such to a People in our Saviour's time, whom, on their requiring a Sign from him, he styles *an evil and an adulterous Generation*.

Mat. 12.
38, 39.

2. 'Tis uncertain, should God stoop so low, whether the single Testimony of his Voice would settle us in a lasting Confidence of the Goodness of our State; because no particular Man on Earth is so certainly Good, but he may alter and become a bad Man. And the Comfort of such a Testimony would not belong to us any longer than we continue in that good Estate which God testifies to us of, as 'tis evident in the Case of *Eli's* House, and also of our first Parents in Paradise. Besides, should not we be apt to disbelieve this Testimony when we come under the Cloud and Darkeness of a Temptation, as *Peter* did when he deny'd his Lord with Oaths and Curses, altho he heard God's Voice, and saw Christ's Glory at his Transfiguration? Or when thro Weakness of Memory we have lost the remembrance of it, or by some Sin or other are depriv'd of the Sense and Comfort of it?

1 Sam. 2.
30.

Mat. 26.
74.

3. 'Tis sinful, because such a Desire can't be without manifest Contempt of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, exprest in those Methods which he has settled in the Person of our Saviour, and Grace of the Gospel, for the Encouragement of poor Sinners, and Comfort of the Hearts of such as are truly Godly, when the

are under Trouble and Temptation. To turn our Backs on these Breasts full of Milk, to condemn the Order which God has settled, to decline to observe his Precepts and to believe his Promises, which he has fill'd with Power and Virtue to satisfy the reasonable Desires of every pious Man ; is to tempt God, and to sin against him. Nay, 'tis to provoke him to deprive and leave us, with those in the Gospel, destitute of the Means of Grace, till we are taught better to prize 'em, and with a more becoming Reverence to use 'em : Like prudent Parents, who when their Children are peevish, and quarrel with the Provision which they make for 'em, and nothing will please and satisfy 'em but something unsuitable to their Nature, withdraw it, till by sharpness of Appetite they are taught to receive it in a more childlike manner, and use it with Thankfulness.

4. Should God thus testify with an audible Voice from Heaven, whatever thou imaginest, it may be so far from satisfying and furnishing thee with this Assurance of Hope, as that it may turn thy Hope into Fears, fill thee with Horror and Amazement, clothe thy Countenance with a ghastly Paleness, set thy strongest Pillars a trembling, and cause thy Heart to faint and die within thee. When the Almighty utters his Voice, the Thundrings of it are too terrible for us. Alas ! we have contracted such a Weakness by Sin, as renders us utterly incapable (in a mortal State) of conversing with God Face to Face, as *Adam* in Innocency did. We can (generally speaking) no more hear his Voice, than see his Face. A Sight of his Glory would dim the Eye, the Sound of his Voice would stun the Ear ; yea, either the one or the other might strike us dead. 'Twas this which

Exod. 20. made *Israel* afraid to go up to the Mount, lest
 18, 19. hearing the Voice of God they should die; and
 therefore they desir'd *Moses* to ascend and hear
 Deut. 5. what the Lord would speak, promising they
 24, 25. would receive it from his Mouth, concluding
 they could not hear the Voice of God and live.
 The Voice of God is too tremendous to be at-
 tended to by Mortals: which sufficiently detects
 the Folly of those, as under no small Delusion,
 whom nothing will satisfy unless God speak in
 an extraordinary way; tho' 'tis certain, should
 he speak after such a manner, that's not the or-
 dinary Testimony by which we attain to Chris-
 tian Assurance.

For, 2. God has another Voice, by which
 he testifies to Man what his State is, and assures
 the godly Man of the Happiness of his Condi-
 tion, viz. his sweet and still Voice in the Gospel
 Heb. 1. 1, 2. of the ever-blessed Jesus; for God, who at sun-
 dry Times, and in divers Manners, spake in times
 past by the Prophets, has in these last days spoke to
 us by his Son, by whom the Horrors of it (as
 'twas heard in the Mount) are remov'd, and
 this Voice of God (otherwise terrible) is so
 mollify'd and sweeten'd, that it overpowers not
 the Frame and Capacity of mortal Man. This
 is the Voice by which God testifies to Sinners
 the Wretchedness of their present State, and
 the inevitable Misery of the future in another
 World, unless a timely and sincere Repentance
 in this prevents. And by the Gospel-Testi-
 mony he settles the truly godly Man in a com-
 fortable Persuasion of the Safety and Happiness
 of his State, both here and hereafter.

The sacred Scriptures are the Voice of God,
 the Words of his own Mouth, a perfect Draught
 and Copy of his Mind and Will, whereby he
 transacts Matters with us in the Person and
 Ministry

True Grounds of Assurance.

57

Ministry of a Mediator. For, as the Voice of the Prince is in the Herald, so the beseeching and assuring Voice of God is in the Gospel. What the Scripture says, God speaks, tho in a middle Person, as St. Paul intimates, speaking of Gospel-Ministers: *Now then we are Embassadors for Christ, as the God did beseech you by us,* 2 Cor. 5. 20. *we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconcil'd to God.* By the Ministry of this Word or Testimony, Sinners are converted to God, brought into a State of Grace, and confirm'd in a comfortable Hope of Glory. By this he teaches Sinners his way, engages Saints to walk in it, and encourages to a steddy Perseverance in Assurance of Immortality and Eternal Life. By this God tells us of a blessed Reward in store, and also for whom it is reserv'd: *Verily, says the Lord by David, there is a Reward for the Righteous.* Pl. 19. 7. Act. 26. 18. Pl. 58. 11.

Every one, sincerely devoted to God, and conformable to him in Virtue and Goodness, may rest confident of being interested in the Good of his Promises, and of attaining Happiness and Glory on continuing to the End. Such, according to the Scriptures of Truth, may know that whatever Happiness is propos'd in 'em, shall be their Portion, since they thus speak: *The Lord is a Sun and a Shield; the Lord will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly. Say ye to Isa. 3. 10. the Righteous, it shall be well with him: For, he that has my Commandments, and keeps 'em, says John 14. Christ, I will love him, and my Father will love him, and manifest himself to him. Hence they are stil'd Blessed, who keep his Commandments, as they have Right to the Felicity of the Paradise of God. Such shall have a sure Security from all Evil; for they shall dwell on high, their Place* Isa. 33. of 15, 16.

of Defence shall be the Munition of Rocks, their Bread shall be given 'em, their Water shall be sure. Nay, more than this, they shall be taken into the eternal Views of God's Glory, and reap for ever the mature Fruits of Heaven's Felicity:

Vet. 17. For thine Eyes shall behold the King in his Beauty; and as St. Peter says, an abundant Entrance shall be minister'd to such into the everlasting Kingdom.

19.

Thus the Testimony of God's Word (the Scriptures) contributes to furnish the believing and obedient Person with a Christian Confidence and Assurance of Glory. But a

Third Testimony conducing thereto, is the Witness of God's Spirit in us. 'Tis certain,

Rom. 8.9. he who has not the Spirit of God in him is none of his; and that no Man knows the things which

are freely given him of God, but by the Evidence of his Spirit in him. By this Testimony, in conjunction with that of the Word, the truly pious Man comes to a firm Persuasion of the Goodness of his State, and that we abide in

1 Joh. 3. Him, i. e. in his favour, and He in us. Among the many Ends and Purposes for which God has

24.

given us his Spirit, these following are some of 'em: 1. To teach us the Knowledg of things which we know not, by giving us Understanding in the Scriptures, which Man by mere natural Knowledg can never acquire; or to guide us in all Truth. 2. To assist us in the Practice of

those Truths which he reveals and makes known to us; for which, without his Aid, we should

13.

be utterly unable, as St. Paul confesses: We know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit helps our Infirmitys, and makes Intercession for us (or in us) according to the Will of God, who in

compassion to our Weakness, has graciously promis'd his Holy Spirit to them who ask it.

13.

And David, under Experience of his own Insufficiency,

sufficiency, sues earnestly to God that he would not take his Holy Spirit from him. 3. Another End is, to comfort our Souls in a practical Conformity to the Divine Will; and hence our Saviour stiles him *the Comforter*. 4. To sanctify us in Heart and Life, making us more like God, whose Image we profess to bear. 5. To seal and assure to us the Certainty of that Happiness which God has in store for holy Souls: *The Holy Spirit of God*, says St. Paul, whereby ye are seal'd to the Day of Redemption. As the Seal ratifies Covenants among Men, and is an Evidence to each Party concern'd; so the Impress of God's Seal upon our Hearts, or the Indwelling of his Spirit in us, witnesses to us our Adoption and Right to the celestial Inheritance. For if by the Spirit we cry, *Abba Father*, we are *Children*; and if *Children*, then *Heirs*, as the Apostle excellently argues. 6. 'Tis given as a Pledg and Earnest, to settle our Souls in a firm and solid Expectation of that Happiness which will be perfectly unfolded in the Day of Redemption or Resurrection. For St. Paul expressly tells us, 'tis *the Earnest of our Inheritance*, &c. Whence take notice, (1.) Of the Excellency of the Inheritance, which is secur'd by so valuable an Earnest given us of God; since among Men Earnests are but very small Parts in comparison of the Whole. (2.) How sure and certain this Inheritance is made to us, in that we have the Spirit of Truth given us as an Earnest of it.

But here it may be demanded, how we may know that we have this good Spirit given us of God? the certain Knowledg whereof will render us comfortable under all Events, and furnish us with Assurance of Hope; since we are bid to try the Spirit whether it be of God, it being

Pl. 51. 17.

Joh. 16. 7.

1 Cor. 6. 11

Eph. 4. 30.

Rom. 8.

15, 16, 17.

2 Cor. 1. 22

5. 5.

Eph. 1. 14.

1 Joh. 4. 1.

Ch. 4. 3. being out of doubt there is an evil Spirit,
 Eph. 2. 2, 3 which is so call'd from the Nature and Ten-
 dency of its Motions, which is either to betray
 us into Error in Judgment or Disobedience in
 Life. Therefore the more clearly we know
 that we have the Spirit of God, the more con-
 fident we shall rest in hope of that Glory to
 which it leads. And if we are serious in this
 Enquiry, we may come to the knowledg of it
 by these three Rules.

First, By fix'd Resolutions to prosecute the
 Mortification of every Lust and Corruption,
 under its Conduct and Assistance. I pre-
 sume there are none who imagine they have no
 Work of this nature to do, since the Apostle
 Rom. 7. 23. says, *We have a Law in our Members warring a-*
 Gal. 5. 17. *gainst the Law of our Minds; and that the Flesh*
lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the
Flesh. They are different Powers in us opposing
 each other, striving for Mastery, and whether shall
 take Regency in the Soul: and if at any time, on
 feeling this Conflict in us, we consent to retain
 our Lusts as a sweet Morsel, to gratify our sen-
 sual Appetites, and indulge our vicious Inclina-
 tions, as *Samson* did his *Delilah*, or spare a
 beloved Lust or bosom Iniquity, as *Saul* did
 1 King. 15. *Amaleck* with the best of the Sheep and Oxen;
 then we are Votarys for the Flesh, yield to its
 Power over us, and submit our selves to the
 Rule and Dominion of it, and so grieve the
 Spirit, and provoke him to depart from us, as
 If. 63. 10. *Israel* did.

But if on every sensible stirring and striving
 of Sin in us, we call in the Aid of the Spirit of
 Grace, enabling us to thrust the Knife of a
 Holy Resolution into the Throat of it, pur-
 posing with Conscience to God, to give the
 Flesh no longer Quarter in the Soul, and ac-
 cordingly

cordingly apply our selves to the destruction of it: this will comfortably argue, that we have the Spirit of God, since 'tis certain there is no Mortification of Sin but by the Spirit, as the Apostle teaches, saying, *If ye live after Rom. 8. the Flesh, ye shall die; but if ye thro the Spirit do 13. mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live.* And as a Token of the Spirit and Power of Christ resting on him, he says, *I so run, not as uncer- 1 Cor. 9. tainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the Air; but 26, 27. I keep my Body in subjection, &c.* We can't on good grounds conclude we have the Spirit of Grace, unless in the strength of it we fight against Sin, the World, and the Devil.

Secondly, If we so esteem of the Spirit of God; as to yield our selves to be led and govern'd by it. To move under its Influences, to act by its Directions, to walk by its Conduct, will assure us of our Adoption, and evidence us clearly to be the Children of God; for *as Rom. 8. many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons 14. of God.* A Privilege great and desirable, but peculiar to the Godly, who carefully walk in those ways wherein the Spirit of God leads; which are the Paths of Holiness and Virtue, *Prov. 8. 20. chalk'd out in the Precepts of the Sacred Scriptures.* Walking dissonant from that Rule of Righteousness, is not to walk after the Spirit, but after the Flesh; yea, to spur on towards Death and Destruction. The fairest Shew and most plausible Plea which any can make to the Spirit of God, whilst their Conversation is not correspondent with the Laws of Heaven, is at best but Pretence. And the higher our Pretence is from outward Appearances, the greater will be our Mistake and Disappointment if we live in the known Neglect and Contempt of the Gospel-Precepts: St. John tells us, that *he who keeps*

- 1 Joh. 3. *keeps his Commandments, dwells in God and God in him.* Whereas on the contrary, *he that commits*
 24.
 Ver. 8. *Sin is of the Devil: That is, he is the Devil's*
 Servant, led by the Conduct of that Spirit,
 Eph. 2. 2. *who is said to rule or work in the Children of Dis-*
obedience.

Thirdly, If we exercise the Graces of the Spirit, and bring forth the Fruits of it, displaying that in our Conversations which it works in some measure in every Soul where it abides. Now whether the Spirit personally dwells in us, or only by its Gifts and Graces, I shall not determine, but leave the Decision of that to those who look on the Knowledge of it more necessary than I do. But this I certainly know, that wherever the Spirit of God is, 'tis not a barren and fruitless Agent, a sleepy and dead Principle, but lively and active, working our Souls into a likeness to it self, enriching us with its Gifts and Graces, that we may every day bring forth those Fruits which proceed from the Spirit of God who dwells in us. Do we therefore love God and all who love him, however unlovely they be in the eye of the World? Do we love 'em for their greater Likeness to God, tho of differing Apprehensions in some doubtful things, more than those of our own Opinion, if more remiss, careless, and less concern'd in propagating Piety than the former?

Is it our continual Care to live in peace with all Men, but more especially with the Church of God; refusing to judg and censure those who differ from us only in Matters of Opinion, as ignorant and wicked? Are we meek and lowly, patient and long-suffering towards all Men, whether profess'd Friends or open Enemies, under all those Wrongs and Injuriys which they

they on any occasion offer us? Not but that it may be lawful, yea the Duty of a Good Man, to defend his Right and vindicate his Innocency; but then it must be done without Wrath and Fury, in Calmness of Spirit, designing only to secure our just Rights, and not in the least to hurt him with whom we deal, tho we had the ascendant over him, and both Power and Opportunity so to do. All our Works must be manag'd with Love to God, with Desire of the Peace of the Church and State, and with much Patience towards all Men. If we bring forth these Fruits of the Spirit, we assuredly know that the Spirit of God dwells in us: for as the Apostle says, *The Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Gal. 5. 22, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, 23. Faith, Meekness, Temperance; against such there is no Law.* I proceed to a

Fourth Evidence conducing to settle the pious Man in a firm Persuasion of the Goodness of his State and Condition, viz. the Testimony of his own Conscience, provided it be regulated by the Testimony of God in the Holy Scriptures. For want of this, some Peoples Consciences give 'em wrong Ideas and a false account of themselves, being misguided by Education and an early imbibing false Principles; or being fear'd by ill Habits and Custom in Sin, which, as might be shewn in many Instances, makes Men flatter themselves with a Conceit that *they shall have Peace, tho they walk in the Deut. 29. Imagination of their own Hearts.* But supposing ^{19, 20.} Conscience unbias'd and free from such Inconveniences, if Men would calmly and impartially hearken thereto, it would discover and lay open the dangerous State of the Wicked in order to their Repentance and Amendment, and bear witness to a pious Man's Sincerity for his

his Encouragement and Comfort. 'Tis the
 Rom. 2. 15. **Property and Office of Conscience** either to
 accuse or excuse, and so make evident the Truth
 of every Man's State to himself. Would we
 seriously hearken and solemnly appeal to our
 own Hearts, with intention of being concluded
 by their Judgment about our States; they
 would soon yield us such a Testimony, as to
 resolve us beyond all doubt and scruple, whether
 abiding in the present State, and pursuing our
 present Course of Life, will end in Weal or in
 Woe; lead to the Enjoyment of the Bliss and
 Happiness of Heaven, or plunge us under the
 Pain of God's eternal Displeasure in Hell,
 where it will to the utmost be reveal'd against
 all Unrighteousness of Men.

So faithful is the Witness which Conscience
 gives every Man upon his Appeal to it, as fills
 the Wicked with Terrours and Fears, more
 grievous to their Souls than Stabs and Wounds
 in the Body. Guilt arms the Conscience with
 Stings, wherewith it pierces to the quick; shew-
 ing the Mischief of living self-condemn'd, and
 especially discovering those amazing and exqui-
 site Torments which God has prepar'd, *who*, as
 1 Joh. 3. the Apostle tells us, *is greater than our Hearts*.
 20. Our Hearts are great enough to condemn us if
 we are wicked; but God is greater, *i. e.* able
 to execute the Sentence and Condemnation of
 Conscience on every incorrigible Person. Tho
 Ecclef. 8. a Sinner live a hundred years, and multiplies
 12, 13. his Transgressions under the Forbearance of
 God, yet he shall not go unpunish'd. God has
 undertaken the Punishment of such as will not
 be reclaim'd, and none can deliver out of his

Job 10. 7. Hand, or Judgment.

Yet so foolish is every wicked Man, that be-
 cause his Conscience deals faithfully, and disco-
 ver

vers the Truth of his State, he cares not to adhere to it, but says of it as *Ahab* of *Micaiah*, *I hate him, for he never prophesies good of me.* 1 Kings 22. 8. How can the Unreasonableness of foolish Men appear greater than resolvedly to go on in their sinful Courses, and take Conscience to be their Enemy for telling 'em the truth! But 'tis no wonder that they have so little regard to Conscience and its Testimony, since they have no more respect for God, by whose Authority Conscience acts; than to say to him, *Depart* Job 21. 14. *from us, we desire not the Knowledge of thy ways.*

But on the other hand, as there is nothing so much esteem'd as God by the truly pious Man, so he has a venerable Regard to the Testimony of his Conscience. He'll sacrifice his dearest Interests, and quit all that's valuable, before he'll let go the Consciousness of his own Integrity, as *Job* well expresses it; *Till I die I will not remove my Integrity from me.* Let Providence work how 'twill for making me almost miserable as to my outward State, and let Men judge and say of me what they will from the Greatness of my Distress and Trouble; as long as this Bird sings sweetly in my bosom, I care not. The Goodness of my Conscience preserves my Peace intire, and fills me with Assurance that things will issue better than many think from what appears, as our Apostle assures us, saying, *If our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God: Yea, 'twill fill us with Joy* 1 Joh. 3. 21 *in the midst of our Sadness, and prove a Spring whence Joy and Assurance flows, as St. Paul tells us; Our rejoicing is this, the Testimony of* 2 Cor. 1. 12 *our Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not in fleshly Wisdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World.* A

Fifth Ground whence this Christian Assurance arises, is a knowing our selves to be interested in Christ, his Death and Mediation. That he died for all, according to the Scriptures, and tasted Death for every Man, is true ; but 'tis as true that many, yea the most for whom he died, are void and destitute of knowing themselves to be such as have any Lot, Part, or Portion in him, and by reason of their Unbelief and Impiety may conclude they have none ; it being certain that they who believe not in the

Joh. 3. 18. Son of God are in a state of Condemnation,
8. 4. and so continuing, *shall die in their Sins*. Had not Christ died to make Atonement, there had been no Hope for any ; and now *there is no other*

Acts 4. 12. *Name given under Heaven* whereby Men can be
Heb. 10. 20. sav'd, but the Name of Jesus Christ, who is
Joh. 14. 6. our one and only way to the Father, by whom
Psal. 11. 6. alone we can escape that fearful Deluge of flaming Wrath, which God will rain down as a terrible Tempest on all Christless Persons, and arrive at the Haven of Rest and Blessedness.

An Interest in Christ not apprehended by the Soul (if such a thing can be) will never furnish it with Assurance of Salvation ; but 'twill still be uncertain, thro the perplexing Doubts, tormenting Fears, and ruffling Suggestions of Satan, which often arise in, and trouble the Mind.

Indeed to have an Interest in Christ, and not know it, seems only proper to an Infant-State, and not to the Adult, except such whose Peace is interrupted and whose Understandings are clouded by Melancholy, or some other uncomfortable Accident, which discomposes the Mind and disables 'em (tho their State in Christ is very secure) for drawing a comfortable Conclusion of it ; to which we shall speak more particularly hereafter. But for Men, who are happily

happily free from so uncomfortable a Circumstance, to say they have Union with Christ, and an Interest in him, implies knowledg that 'tis so, or else they speak of they know not what, and say not the truth; like many who build all their Hopes upon a bare Profession of him, without making any serious Inquiry after their Right to him: whereas the Confidence of such will be wretchedly shaken when their *Hope shall perish*, which, *Bildad* says, *shall be cut off*, Job 8. 13; and fitly compares it to a Spider's Web; and 14. who knows not how poor a Shelter a Spider's Web would be? And as little Security can the Hypocrite's Hope yield him, when the Battering-Pieces of the Almighty shall be discharged at him.

Now that nothing short of an Interest in Christ, his Death and Mediation, can secure us from Wrath, and render us safe and happy, will appear if we consider,

1. That God is never to be reconcil'd to Sinners but in Christ, in whom he was and is *reconciling the World to himself*. There is no Peace 1 Cor. 5. to be had but by him, who is our Peace-maker. 18, 19. He is our Shield, to ward off the Blow, which Eph. 2. 14. otherwise the Hand of Justice would give us, and strike us dead. He is our only Sanctuary (or Gen. 19. *Zoar*) by whom we are shelter'd from the terrible Storms of Divine Vengeance, and skreen'd that the consuming Fire kindles not on us, which will one day take hold of such as are Christless and Graceless; for to such God will be, as Heb. 12. our Apostle declares, *a consuming Fire*. There is ult. no Freedom from Condemnation but in him. Rom. 8. 1.

2. Consider we our wretched and miserable Condition out of Christ; for so we are hopeless Eph. 2. 12. and helpless. Of all Persons in the world a Christless Man, tho under the Enjoyment of

whatever the Earth can afford him, is the most miserable: (1.) As he is deeply indebted to God for Life, and the multitude of Mercys receiv'd every day from him; and that Debt must needs be very great, which is every day heigh-ten'd and increas'd by fresh Parcels receiv'd in, and no part of the Account at any time paid off and discharg'd. Therefore our Blessed Saviour tells us in the Parable, that the Sum which such Men owe is ten thousand Talents: A mighty Debt indeed, if every Talent (as computed) be 187*l.* 10*s.*

Mat. 18.
14.

Well, but admit the Debt were greater, if the Sinner has current Coin enough to discharge it and make satisfaction, all may be well. But alas! the Misery of such is, that they have not wherewithal to pay. They have receiv'd much, but have nothing, not one farthing of current Coin to produce. All is spent and gone in riotous living. They are become mere Bankrupts; and what can such expect but shortly to be arrested by their Creditor, and cast into Prison?

Mat. 5. 25,
26.

And if it once comes to that, as it may, Sinner, before the Evening of this Day, there thou must lie *till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing*; and how that will ever be possible consider, since thou hast not one penny towards Payment, no not a farthing to procure the least Abatement of the just Severities of a Sin-re- venging God, nor to purchase *one Drop of Water to cool a flaming Tongue*.

Luke 16.
24, 25.

Rev. 3.
17, 18.

I know Sinners generally care not to entertain such Thoughts as these, but flatter themselves with Hopes, as the *Laodiceans* did, from their full and splendid Appearance, that they are not so poor as is talk'd of; or if they should prove so in the issue, they'l have better Hope, since the Lord is a more merciful God, than to be

be so severe: they rather think that from his innate Goodness he'll be mov'd with Pity, and have compassion for his great Name's sake. No, Sinner, as we told you before, out of Christ God will never be reconcil'd, nor treat with fal'n Men in any other way, nor be intreated by 'em unless for his sake. Therefore either interest thy self in Christ, that he may become thy Surety and Bondman to the Justice of God, or conclude thy Misery certain, and that 'twill be speedy and unavoidable; as Death and Hell are waiting for thee, 'twill not be long e'er Death will seize and Hell retain and hold thee, and that as long as Hell it self endures.

But (2.) Christless Souls are miserable on account of their being Rebels and Traitors against God, their Sovereign Lord, his Crown and Dignity. Who of us but must acknowledg our selves guilty, considering how we have in a course of sinning debas'd the Majesty of God, and from an Aversion to be controul'd have in effect said with *Pharaoh*, *Who is the Lord that we* Exod 5.2. *should obey him?* O how have we injur'd the blessed Attributes of God, kicking at his Omnipotence by the frequency of our Rebellions, denying his Omniscience by encouraging our selves in secret Wickedness, with the Antients of *Israel* in the Chambers of their Imagery, who said, *The Lord sees us not*; disparaging his Ezek. 8. Holiness, as intimating by our Impietys that 12. God is no Enemy to our Sins, but rather a Patron and Abettor of 'em, a Friend to Sinners, Mal. 2. 17. and like 'em; unworthily suggesting from his Patience and Long-sufferance with those of old, as if God were *altogether such a one as themselves*. Ps. 50. 21. How basely also is the Goodness of God abus'd by us, when we suffer his Benefits to slip our Memorys, which we should reckon as so many

Bonds to engage us in his Service. And yet worse, when we employ the Blessings of his Goodness in the Service of our Lusts, multiplying our Sins against the Lord as he abounds in his Mercys; like *Israel*, who as God increas'd the Fruits of his Goodness to 'em, increas'd their Idols, as if he hir'd 'em by his Blessings to kick more strongly against him. O brutish Folly and base Ingratitude, thus to requite the Lord!

Hof. 10. 1.

Deut. 32. 6

Now because there is not one of us but has broken the righteous Law of God, forfeiting thereby all Righteousness wherewith we were ever invested, and by our Sin contracted a Guilt never to be expiated, and a Filth never to be purg'd but by the Death and Blood of Jesus; 'twas necessary, after he had fulfil'd the Law for us, by a strict and perfect Righteousness in the whole Course of his Life, that he should offer himself a Sacrifice in Death to God for us, that by virtue of his suffering, *the Just for the Unjust*, we might be brought nigh to God; i. e. be acquitted and justify'd from all our Sins, deliver'd from a State of Condemnation, and put into a State of Righteousness and Favour: Heb. 9. 22, for the Pardon and Justification of Sinners is wholly founded in the Death and Blood of Christ, who was made Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we (by believing) might be made the Righteousness of God in him.

Eph. 5. 2.

1 Pet. 3. 18.

2 Cor. 5. 21

Isa. 64. 6.

We have no Righteousness but what we have in the Lord Jesus, which can secure us from the Lashes of Vengeance. Should we appear in any other, the Justice of God would find some flaw in it, and so prove our Righteousness to be Unrighteousness. All others are only fit to be exploded as filthy Rags and menstruous Cloths, rather than be rely'd on for

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Acceptation with God. But Justice it self can raise no Objection against the Righteousness of Christ, in whom only we have Righteousness sufficient to set us at rights with God, thro the Merits of his Death and prevailing Intercession, apprehended and apply'd by Faith; and not only so, but to entitle us to the Blessings of eternal Life: for if Christ be ours, all is ours. ^{1 Cor. 3.} Whence St. John without the least scruple says, ^{21, 22.} *He who has the Son, has Life; and he who has not the Son, has not Life:* No, ^{1 Joh. 5.} *he shall not see Life;* ^{12.} *for the Wrath of God abides on him.* ^{Joh. 3. 36.} Thus it appears that nothing short of a real Interest in Christ Jesus can secure the Soul from Wrath, and render it safe and happy.

But still we must remember, that this Christian Assurance rises from the apprehending our selves interested in Christ; and it's stronger or weaker in proportion to our Knowledge of our Union with him. Suppose a Man be born a Prince, and Heir to the greatest Monarch in the World; his Title to the Royaltys of his Father's Crown, his being born to be King and to possess a mighty Empire, yields him little Satisfaction and Pleasure, till he comes to know that the King is his Father. Admit also that there were left to some poor Man a Legacy of ten thousand Pounds; as long as he remains ignorant of it, he is destitute of the abundant Joy which otherwise would arise from it: tho his Estate is mightily better'd by such Gift, yet his Comfort comes in, by his knowing it to be his own, and enjoying it as such. And as 'tis in Temporals, so in Spirituals; whence St. Paul determin'd not to acquaint himself with any of the Excellencys to be found amongst the *Corinthians*, and to know nothing save Jesus Christ, ^{1 Cor. 2. 2.} *and him crucify'd.* To know Christ was the

Whole of his Desire, the Sum of his Endeavour, and that for which he was willing to part with them all, as it's that only which could assure him of the Goodness of his State; and this effectually did it. *Christ in us* (says he is) *Col. 1.27. the Hope of Glory; i. e.* Christ amongst us; intimating that the Soul, by apprehending it self interested in Christ, is furnish'd with Hope and Assurance of Glory.

We'll now briefly inquire by what Rules we may certainly know whether we are so interested in Christ, as to have a well-grounded Hope of Glory, which is the blessed Effect and Fruit of our Union with him, or no. And

1. If we are savingly interested in Christ, we have seen our need of him, and have been sensible of our Wretchedness and Misery without him, and how utterly impossible 'tis to secure our selves from the Storms of flaming Wrath ready to be pour'd down on us guilty Rebels, or to make the least Satisfaction to incens'd Justice from our deep Poverty. Never was any so poor, so guilty, so filthy, so wretched as a gracious Soul has seen himself to be, when destitute of a saving Interest in the Lord Jesus.

2. Such also have apprehended Christ, and in him a Fulness of Grace every way suitable to their Wants; and accordingly have own'd, receiv'd, and apply'd him to the Soul, and rely'd wholly on him for Pardon, Acceptation, and Salvation. In him, and him only, they have experienc'd and found Rest for the Weary, Health for the Sick, Bread for the Hungry, Clothes for the Naked, vast Treasures to enrich them in their deep Poverty, Pardon and Righteousness for the Guilty, Strength for the Weak, and Life for the Dead; and from a

Sense

Sense of his Fulness, apprehended by Faith, have not only apply'd him to their necessitous Souls, but have given up themselves to him : Joh. 1. 12, by which Act of Faith we come to be Parta- with v. 16, kers of his Fulness. Hereby we receive Free- Rom. 8. 1, dom from Condemnation, and arrive at that blessed State of Union with him ; it being certain, that *he who is join'd to the Lord is one Spirit.* 1 Cor. 6.

3. Such as are thus taken into Union with 17. the Lord Jesus, have experienc'd a real and thorow Change in themselves ; they are quite metamorphos'd, they are other sort of Creatures than they were before, they are set on another bottom, breathe in another Element, act by other Principles, and live to other Ends : for, as Paul says, *he who is in Christ is a new* 2 Cor. 5, *Creature.* New ? Not with respect to the Mat- 17. ter of which he is made. We are not in the new Creation divested of the old, and cloth'd with a new Body, or inspir'd with a new Soul ; but new with respect to the Affections and Dispositions of the Soul, which powerfully incline us to lead a new Life, to mend what's amiss, and to order our Conversations aright : Or else how can it appear that *old things are done away, and that all things are become new ?*

Without a new Heart and a new Life, in vain do we pretend to an Interest in Christ, since the Holy Ghost is so express, that *he who is in him is a new Creature* ; intimating beyond contradiction, that such as are not new Creatures are not in Christ. For such as are, have experienc'd a Removal of the old Frame, and a Production of the new ; know that whereas they were once carnal, they are now spiritual ; formerly of a ruffling and turbulent Temper, now of a meek and quiet Spirit. It takes us off our Pride and Haughtiness, and teaches us Humility

Humility and Lowliness. It makes us compassionate and merciful. It raises us to an holy Contempt of the World, works in us Contentation in every state, and Resignation to the Divine Will. It defaces in us the Image of the earthly Man, and moulds us into the Image of the heavenly: yea, it translates us out of the Kingdom of Satan into that of our Lord Jesus; where Christ is own'd as our Head and Lord; where we are subject to his Laws, and by sincere Obedience answer to his pure and holy Precepts, as in the Water Face answers unto Face.

A fourth Rule by which we may know our selves to be savingly interested in Christ, and consequently be assur'd of the Goodness of our State, is our Conformity to him, or imitating of him in all things, by living as he liv'd; for
1 Joh. 2.6. he who says he abides in Christ, ought also to walk even as he walk'd. 'Tis incumbent on every one so to do. To profess Union with Christ, and live in Sin, is diabolical and delusive. A Participation of the Grace of Christ will lead us to shew forth the Virtues of Christ: Which brings me to the

Sixth and Last thing which I shall name, as a Ground whence this Christian Assurance springs; and that is Practical Godliness, Righteousness of Life and Conversation, which is always a Fruit of the Righteousness of Christ imputed for Justification, and the Effect of the Righteousness of Sanctification, wrought in us by the Spirit of Holiness. If this be wanting, we can't on any good ground conclude our selves safe. We may please our selves with fond Fancys, and by airy Speculations and enthusiastick Notions betray our selves into Deceit and Misery, relying on something short of Confor-
 mity

mity to God in Holiness; but 'tis this which most infallibly evidences to us that we are the Children of God, unless St. John be mistaken, who tells us expressly, that *in this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; 10.* *He who does not Righteousness is not of God.* What can be more plain, than that they who are not the Children of God are the Children of the Devil; and not only they who do Unrighteousness, but he who does not Righteousness is not of God? Nothing short of Godliness of Life can assure us that we are the Children of God; and this will do't, as 'tis an Evidence of our being form'd in his Image: for, says the Apostle further, *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know (or know ye) that every one who does Righteousness is born of him.* 1 John 2. 29.

Now since by so unquestionable a Rule it may be made plain to every Man's Conscience what his State is, and to whom he belongs (which we may know if we sincerely examine our own Souls, whether we are Doers or not Doers of Righteousness) we'l for your more particular Help in this Matter shew you, (1.) What we mean by Righteousness of Conversation, and wherein it consists. (2.) That it's necessary to render our State safe, and our Souls comfortable, in the Assurance of the Safety of our State.

As to the former, Righteousness of Life consists in our opposing all the Powers of Sin, resisting all Temptations to Iniquity, in guarding against all the Weapons and Instruments of Unrighteousness, in mortifying all evil Habits and Dispositions, and breaking off all vicious Practices in the Course of our Conversations: For the Destruction of Sin was the Son of God manifested, and all the Precepts of God form'd and level'd, which say, *Wash ye, make ye clean,* Isa. 1. 16.

put away the Evil of your Doings from before my Eyes ; cease to do Evil, learn to do well. Again,
 Jam. 4. 8. *Cleanse your Hands ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts ye Double-minded. Hearts and Hands, Affections and Conversations must be made clean. There must be a Removal of evil Habits, and also a reforming of evil Practices, which is plain from St. Paul's Injunction ; Mor-*
 Col, 3. 5, 6. *tify your Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanness, inordinate Affections, evil Concupiscence and Covetousness, which is Idolatry. These, and such like things, declare us to be the Servants of Sin, and bring down the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience.*

Let's pretend what we will, 'tis very plain Wickedness of Heart and Life must be remov'd and abandon'd, else we shall never have any comfortable Assurance that we belong to God. St. John tells us, that *he who commits Sin is of the Devil ;* i. e. such as commit Sin, so as to abide and continue sinning in the Course of their Lives ; or such as allow themselves in the frequent Practice of any known Sin, tho but one : for there is such a Contrariety to and Enmity against God in the Nature of Sin, that to indulge our selves in any, so as to commit it with Deliberation and Allowance, will argue the Mind to be greatly depriv'd and alienated from God.

Now of such only the Apostle speaks, when he says, *He who commits Sin is of the Devil ;* otherwise 'twou'd lay the Hopes of the most holy Men in the World a gasping : for there is not one who lives and sins not. But tho the righteous Man sins, 'tis not with Allowance and Delight, but thro Weakness and Inadvertence, with Reluctance and Remorse : such being sensible of the Great Majesty they offend,
 are

are deeply humbled for it. If at any time a godly Man is prest down under the Force and Violence of a Temptation, he remains not nor abides in his Sin, but generally gains a Recovery by the Aid of Faith and Repentance, and after Restoration becomes a more resolute Wrestler with Sin and Temptation; insomuch that he is now purpos'd to offend no more, at least not presumptuously. And if such sin thro Weakness, and sincerely repent of it, they need not deject themselves as if there were no Hope; for God has provided a Remedy for 'em, in that believing and pious Men have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. 1 Joh. 2.2.

2. This Righteousness of Life consists in forming and governing our selves by the Rule of God's righteous Law, maintaining a Conformity to him in all we do, employing our selves constantly in that which is good, coming up to that Pitch of Piety which God requires in his Word, and to that Pattern of Righteousness which he has given us in himself, and in the Person of our Saviour, so far as 'tis possible in our mortal State to do; having our Minds continually depending on him for the Supplys of his Grace, faithfully endeavouring to improve all Grace receiv'd to his Glory, by yielding Obedience to his Commandments in all our Actions: This 'twas which denominated Zacharias and Elizabeth to be righteous Persons. Luke 1.6.

By Righteousness of Life we don't mean perfect and sinless Obedience, which was peculiar to our Lord Jesus Christ, but an actual and sincere conforming our selves to God's Commandments, living up to the Obligation which we are under, and performing all Dutys incumbent on us. (1.) In expressing Piety towards God, adhering to him, and labouring to be Holy 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16.

Acts 10.
38.

ly as he is Holy. (2.) By doing all the Good we can to Men; not only in doing to all as we would they should do to us, avoiding all Unrighteousness, managing our Affairs with Truth and Justice, void of Lying, Deceit and Fraud; but in being kind and beneficial, doing those Offices of Respect and Courtesy, whereby we may be profitable to the Souls or Bodys of others; imitating the ever-blessed Jesus, who *went about doing good.* (3.) In maintaining Temperance and Sobriety in the Course of our Lives; a Virtue, which if generally practis'd, wou'd be of universal Advantage. 'Twould make Men content with a little, and keep 'em back from that Injustice and Oppression which many run into: who by breaking the Hedg of God's Commands, in lavishly spending their Patrimony on their Lusts and Pleasures, so often come to Want and Penury; and then being sensible that their former Grandeur must fall into the Dust, and themselves into Contempt, a thing more irksom to many than Death it self; for preventing this, do betake themselves to wretched and unrighteous Courses. Some, under the Disguise of a religious Profession, wrong and defraud those with whom they have to do, by equivocating, lying, and many other Artifices: Others are not asham'd more openly by Force to take away the Right of those they meet with, without any regard to that Righteousness of Life, which we told you consists in departing from Evil, and doing Good.

And now as to the second thing, that this is necessary to render our State safe, and our Souls comfortable in the Assurance of it, will appear from the unerring Testimony of Holy Writ. A Scriptural Evidence is the best-Security

curity we can have thereof: and to evidence we have this Proof, that the godly Man's State is safe and happy, consider *Noah*, who was stil'd a *Preacher of Righteousness* by his Doctrine, 2 Pet. 2. 5. which fell like Dew from Heaven on the old and ungodly World: But when God saw that all means fail'd, which in his Grace and Goodness he thought fit to use with that Generation, and that they would not be restrain'd from following their wicked and vile Intentions, he brought the Flood upon 'em, but first orders an Ark to preserve his righteous *Noah*. Gen. 7. 1.

Also *Lot*, whose righteous Soul was vex'd and griev'd from day to day with the unlawful Deeds of the *Sodomites*, amongst whom he sojourn'd, had by virtue of his Righteousness, which distinguish'd him from the Wicked, such a Sanctuary and Interest in the Favour of God, as secur'd him from those Flames of Fire and Brimstone, which destroy'd the People with their Citys. Nay, (with reverence be it spoken) such is the Respect which God has to his righteous Servants, and Concern for their Safety, as restrains his Hands from executing his just Judgments on the Wicked, till his godly Ones are out of the reach of 'em. Gen. 19. 22.

Another Witness you have in the Prophet *Ezekiel*, testifying the Goodness of a righteous Man's State, in the vast Difference which God makes between the Godly and the Wicked. And as he shews every incorrigible Man, on his continuing in Sin, that he must die; so he assures the pious Man, on his persevering in his Righteousness, doing the things which are right and good in the Sight of the Lord, that he shall live, as the 18th and 33d Chapters shew at large.

Who

Who to this day ever call'd in question; or for any solid reason once doubted of the good
 Luke 1. 6. and happy State of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, by walking in the Lord's Ordinances and Commandments blameless; i. e. uprightly? And 'tis certain, all who sincerely devote themselves, by an actual Conformity of their Actions in the general Course of their Lives, to the Observance of God's Holy Laws, arrive at a State no less safe and happy; as the Apostle assures
 1 Joh. 3. 7. us, *He who does Righteousness is Righteous, even as God is Righteous*: which he introduces with a Caution, charging the Saints that they should not suffer themselves to be seduc'd by the Sophistry of any, how high soever their Pretences were to Faith and Knowledg, whilst they were loose and wicked in their Conversations. Such there were in the Apostles Days call'd *Gnosticks*, who were Men of great Light and high Pretensions, but wretchedly loose and vicious in their Lives, like him from whom they sprang, viz. *Simon Magus*, as some tell us.

And truly 'tis desirable there were no such in our day, as 'tis to be fear'd there are too many who decry all Creature-Duty, make a Noise of Faith, and rest in the Theory of Religion and Godliness, whilst they manifestly neglect Righteousness of Life (the very Life and Power thereof) But whoever they are that thus lie in wait to deceive, believe 'em not, leave 'em under their Delusions; pity 'em rather than be persuaded, either by their pernicious Doctrine or corrupt Example, to neglect Holiness of Life; since he who does Righteousness is born of God, being righteous as God is righteous.

Moreover, that Righteousness of Life is necessary to render our State safe, and our Souls comfortable in the Assurance of it, will be further

further evidenc'd by the following Particulars.

1. It appears from the Design of Satan's Working, which is either to keep us in the Fetters of our Iniquitys, and from turning to God, or else to turn us from our Allegiance to God, and the Obedience of the Just ; which is ² Cor. 4. evident from his Procedure with our first Parents in the Garden.

2. 'Tis also plain from the Sentiments of the Wicked themselves, whose Foundation is no sooner shaken by Death's presenting it self to 'em, but they quit all their former Holds, let go their old Confidences as vain, become sensible of their wretched Mistake, in living sensually, and loving the ways of Unrighteousness ; and therefore with *Balaam* they vehemently cry out, *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.* ^{Numb. 23.} If a Way may be judg'd Good or Bad by the End to which it leads, then no Course so safe as a righteous Life.

3. 'Tis clear from the Judgment of the Godly, that practical Godliness or Righteousness of Life is necessary, since they make it the Matter of their Prayer to God with Holy *David*, that he would deliver 'em from all Evil, and lead 'em on in the way of his righteous Judgments. ^{Pf. 19. 13. Mar. 6. 13. 2 Tim. 4. 18. Psal. 5. 8.}

4. As the Advancement of Holiness is that which our blessed Saviour aim'd at in his Life, wherein he was a perfect Example of all Righteousness ; and in his Death, which he suffer'd, with intent *to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify us to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.* ^{John 13. 15. 1 Pet. 2. 21. Tit. 2. 14.}

5. 'Tis the great Work and Business of the Spirit of Holiness to illuminate and lead us into Truth, to purge and sanctify us, to aid and assist us, to confirm and establish us in Righteousness,

ousness, to form and mould us into the Divine Likeness, by imprinting on our Souls (as the Seal on the Wax) the Character or Image of himself.

6. To make us Holy is the great Design of the Gospel. The Precepts of it are as so many Lines drawn for us to walk by, which give us a Glance of the perfect Purity of God, whose Precepts they are, and shew us to what a Pitch of Godliness we should labour to arrive, and that it should bear some Proportion to his Holiness, who says, *As he who has call'd you is Holy, so be ye Holy in all manner of Conversation.* Gospel-Promises are given us to no other End, nor does the Apostle use 'em to any other purpose than to encourage Righteousness of Life and Conversation, calling on the Saints posselt
 1 Pet. 1. 15, 18. of 'em to *cleans[e] themselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, - and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God.* And that compendious Account which is given us of the Grace of God, which hath appear'd, and brings Salvation to all Men, has no other Intendment than purely to teach us, *that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil World.*
 Tit. 2. 11, 12.

7. To promote Holiness of Life is the manifest Design of God in his Dealings with Men, both by his Mercys and Judgments. By the one he would restrain us from our Rebellions, and by the other allure us to Obedience; and from both would oblige us to observe his Statutes and keep his Laws, who condescends to reason and expostulate with us, saying, *Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O House of Israel? A plain*
 Psal. 105. 45.
 See Ezek. Chap. 18. & 23. Indication, that if we turn from our Wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, we shall live; for he who has no Pleasure in the Death

Death of such as die, can't possibly be pleas'd with Sin, the only Cause of their dying. But from the Purity of his Nature he loves the Righteous, and with Pleasure beholds the Upright: Nay, he accounts highly of 'em, and will glory in 'em as a Man will glory in his choicest Ornaments and most excellent Treasure, and accordingly will use 'em. To speak with reverence, he will not only display the Splendor of their Glory to others, but he himself will take 'em as a Crown and Glory. They shall be a Royal Diadem in the Hand of their God, and for their Comfort he'll give 'em a new Name, *Hephzi-bah*, signifying his Delight in 'em.

Isa. 62. 2,

8. Righteousness of Life is necessary, as 'tis the way wherein the pious Man may most certainly expect to meet with God. 'Tis the Highway, the beaten Path in which he most frequently takes his Turn with the Soul; as the Prophet speaking to God says, *Thou meetest him who rejoices and works Righteousness, and remembers thee in thy Ways.* As Princes have their publick Walks, so they have their more private Ways to meet and impart themselves to such of their Favourites as they please; even so has God his private Way to meet and solace the pious Soul, which is done by the quickening and comforting Influences of the Holy Spirit blowing upon 'em, whereby he is many times with 'em before they are aware, causing their sluggish and drossy Spirits delightfully to mount up Heaven-wards, filling the Sails of their Affections with pleasant and refreshing Gales, ravishing the Heart with Joy, and that in such a manner, as they can give no certain account of.

3, 4.

Isa. 64. 5.

But tho most, if not all the sincerely Godly, experience it to be so; yet the way in which God most usually visits and meets his People,

is Righteousness of Life. There he manifests himself in his Love and Grace to the Soul; therein he leads and guides for gracious Ends and happy Purposes: and if at any time such are at a loss, and mourning under a want of the Divine Presence, the most certain way of meeting with him is that of his own Institutions, as we may learn from his gracious Answer to the enquiring Spouse: *Tell me*, says she, *O thou whom my Soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy Flocks to rest at Noon; for why should I be as one that turns aside from the Flocks of thy Companions? If thou knowest not*, replies he, *O thou fairest among Women, go thy Ways forth by the Footsteps of the Flock, and feed thy Kids by the Shepherds Tents.*

John 14.
21.
Cant. 7.
12.
Prov. 20.
8, 9.

Cant. 1.
7, 8.

An active Attendance on God in a religious Observance of his Commands, is the most sure and certain way to meet with him, and that for the most excellent purpose, viz. enjoying Communion with him. Communion springs from Likeness, and is always an Effect of Love; but how God, who is Righteousness it self, can hate Sin (which he must necessarily do) and at the same time indulge the Sinner under the Dominion of his Lusts, is not to be imagin'd. There is such an Enmity in Contrarys, as renders it impossible to reconcile 'em whilst the Enmity remains: either God must part with the Purity of his Nature, which is impossible to him, or else the Sinner must part with his Unrighteousness, without which there can be no Communion. For saith St. Paul, *What Communion hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? What Fellowship hath Light with Darknes?* None at all. There is always an Opposition between the Flesh and Spirit, between a righteous God and an unrighteous Soul. Was it not Sin which

2 Cor. 6.
14.

which begat the Difference between God and Man? A swerving from original Righteousness, which turn'd the Angels out of Heaven, and our first Parents out of Paradise? And will not Sin, which first begat the Distance, maintain the Separation where 'tis not sincerely repented of? And if so, 'tis as reasonable to imagine it possible for God to enter into a League of Friendship with the Devil, as to have Communion with an impure Soul.

Our Communion with God is founded on a Removal of the Unrighteousness of Sin, and practising Righteousness in the Course of our Lives, flowing from Union with a Holy Jesus; and of this the Lord himself assures us, saying, *Cease to do evil, learn to do well, and then come* Isa. 1. 16, *and let us reason together; tho your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; tho they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* For a Man to fancy, whilst he is in a State of Unrighteousness, that he is a Favourite of God and in Communion with him, is to deceive himself under the clearest Light and fullest Evidence which can be to the contrary. If we say that *we have Fellowship with God, and walk in Darkeness,* 1 John 1. 6, 7. *we lie and do not the Truth; but if we walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, then have we Fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all Sin.*

9. That Righteousness of Life is necessary, is further evident, in that we can have no comfortable Assurance of our Election of God without it. That there is an Election of Men and Women to Salvation, according to the Grace and good Pleasure of God, is most certain; but to suppose or presume that we are of that number, whilst under the Dominion of any Sin, is so far from affording us a probability of

it, that we may from all good Reason, whilst we gratify a sensual Appetite, conclude the contrary. For tho the Elect of God are chosen in Christ before the Foundation of the World, in the Apostle's sense; and to know our selves to be the Subjects of Electing Love, is Grace so great, that it sets us but one Step short of Heaven, and gives us now and then a Glimpse of the Glory of it: yet we can never know our selves to be such, but by being *Holy and without Blame before him in Love*; which is the thing he has in Christ most immediately chosen us to, and which the Holy Spirit testifies to Man of.

Nothing, I say, can assure us of our Election, but Holiness of Heart and Life; and that will, as the inspir'd David acknowledges: *Psal. 4. 3. Know ye that the Lord has set apart him who is Godly for himself*; which is exprest, partly to comfort the Godly under the Discouragements which attend 'em thro the various Afflictions which they suffer, but more especially to correct the Mistake, and check the growing Pride of wicked and presumptuous Men, who from their flourishing and prosperous State, were ready to conclude, in the height of their Impiety, that they were the Darlings of Heaven, tho nothing be more false, as the Spirit of God has made evident. And St. Paul uses the Consideration of our Election as a Motive to induce us to Holiness, or to grow and increase more and more therein. We may as well dream of finding Ease in Hell, as fancy to have the Privileges of the Elect of God, whilst we wallow in the Mire of any of our Iniquitys.

10. Nothing can truly avail and profit us while we are destitute of Righteousness of Life; especially when we come to stand before Christ, the righteous Judg, at the dreadful Tribunal.

What

What will it advantage a Man then to say that he believ'd, without a Progeny of good Works testifying the Truth of his Faith? *Can Faith save him?* No, it will not, it cannot, for *Faith Jam. 2. without Works is dead.* 'Tis but an empty Sound, ^{14, 17.} an airy Speculation, a dead Principle; being alone. Next to an Interest in Christ, a well-spent Life will contribute most to our Comfort in Death, and to furnish us with Boldness in the Great Day, when Christ will appear cloth'd in Righteousness, and prepar'd to execute Judgment. His prevailing Intercession, as our High Priest, will then cease, and all Opportunitys for getting Grace will be at an end; the most eloquent Oratory, melting Importunity, and passionate Crys will then prove fruitless. How vain then will be all Pleas urg'd from Profession and Privileges? Being Auditors of Christ's holy Discourses, eating and drinking in his Presence, casting out Devils in his Name, and doing many wonderful Works will not avail, if upon the Scrutiny, which he will then make, we be found *Workers of Iniquity*. The Cry of our Sins unrepented of will be more effectual to our Condemnation, than the Plea of our Miracles, if we had 'em to urge, will be for our Acceptation; of which our Lord has sufficiently inform'd us, saying, *Not every one who says, Mat. 7:21; Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Hea- 22, 23. ven; but he that doth the Will of my Father who is in Heaven, &c.*

11. That a Conformity to God in Holiness is necessary to render our State safe, and our Souls comfortable, is certain from the Advantage which shall accrue to the Righteous under all Occurrences. Let Wind and Tide move as they will; let Crosses and Afflictions come like the Waves of the Sea, one rolling on the Neck.

- of another; let Men and Devils conspire, and all things in human Judgment run counter to the pious Man's Interest, yet he is the only safe and happy Man in the World. The wise and omnipotent God is concern'd for his Security and Welfare, who must be divested of his Goodness and Faithfulness, before such shall suffer Damage by the most fierce and battering Storms which can be rais'd against 'em: And of this he would not have 'em ignorant, charging his Prophet to assure *the Righteous, that it shall go well with 'em.* It can't go otherwise, since God has engag'd to order and dispose all things for their Good.
- Isa. 3. 10. *And the Psalmist assures us, that the Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance. God will never forget 'em, he will always have 'em in Mind, not only to sustain 'em under Misfortunes, and deliver 'em out of Troubles, but gloriously to reward their Work and Labour of Love, which they have shewn towards his Name; in taking 'em to the Enjoyment of a Kingdom prepar'd for 'em, where he'll place a Royal Diadem on their blessed Heads, and clothe 'em with Glory more bright than the Sun in the Firmament. Christ will welcome all the Righteous with a Well done, and Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepar'd for you. Then shall he make good (if not sooner) the Truth of David's Attestation, Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous.*
- Rom. 8. 28.
Ps. 112. 6.
Is. 49. 15.
Heb. 6. 10.
Mat. 25. 34.
Ps. 58. 11.

Thus we have shewn you that Righteousness of Life flowing from Purity of Heart, the certain Fruit of Union with Christ, is necessary to render our State safe, and our Souls comfortable in Assurance of it. O therefore follow after Righteousness, and exercise your selves always to Godliness. Give God the Glory of sincere

sincere Obedience thro the whole Course of your Lives, allowing your selves in no Sin, nor in the Omission of any part of your Duty; and he will assure your Hearts that practical Godliness is more than an airy Speculation, as having the Promise of the Life which now is, and of that which is to come. Thus have we discover'd the true Grounds whence Christian Assurance arises. We now proceed to the

Third Thing which I propos'd to do, and that is to assign some of the PROPERTYS of this Assurance, that such as think they have it, may, by the most probable and certain Rules, know whether it be of the right kind. But because I have been so large on the Grounds whence it arises, where enough is said to satisfy any Man who will deal candidly with himself, whether he be assur'd of his Salvation on a right bottom or not, I'll speak more briefly of the Propertys and Handmaids of Assurance: And the

First is Admiration of the Grace and Love of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ towards us. This fills the Soul with Wonder, upon its soaring aloft in Contemplation, and taking a View by Faith, as from Mount *Pisgah*, of the matchless Excellency of unseen things. Every Glimpse we have of God, every Taste of his Love, and Remembrance of his Mercys, must needs lead us to admire both them and their Author. Many things happen in the World unusual and rare, which we are apt to wonder at; but a pious Man marvels at nothing so much as the Love of God, manifesting himself savingly in the Face of Jesus Christ, and assuring the Soul of so high and excellent an Happiness as that of Heaven and Glory; the consideration whereof fills the Mind with Raptures, and makes

John 14. 22. makes good Men in an Ecstasy of Joy often enquire (as Persons astonish'd) with the Disciple, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thy self unto us, and not unto the World?* To us as vile as others, who have sin'd against thee with as high a hand as others, and have merited Hell as well as others? How is it that thou hast broken our Fetters, pluck'd us as Brands out of the Burning, rais'd us out of the Mire of our Corruptions, destroy'd our Enmity, taken us into Favour, adopted us into thy House, and treated us as Children?

Grace never to be thought of by us without Wonder! A Sense whereof disposes an ingenuous Soul, in whom this Work of Grace is wrought, notwithstanding all Powers obstructing, to rise higher in Joy, and with more triumphant Shouts to cry, *Grace! Grace! unto it,* Zech. 4. 7. *than the Jews did in Ezra's time, on their be-* with Ezra *holding the Foundation of their Temple laid,* 3. 12, 13. *at which the old Men wept for Joy, and the young Men shouted aloud, so that the Noise was heard afar off. I say, a Sense of it leads us to admire it, and to say with the Apostle, Be-* 1 Joh. 3. 1. *hold! what manner of Love has the Father bestow'd on us, that we should be called the Sons of God! Or with David, in the Foretasts of Heaven and Glory, which pious Souls have in the Assurance of it, O how great is thy Goodness which* Ps. 31. 19. *thou hast laid up for them that love thee, for them who trust in thy Mercy! Or with St. Paul, O the* Eph. 3. 18, 19. *Heighth and Depth, Breadth and Length of the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge! O Grace both boundless and bottomless, never to be comprehended but to be eternally admir'd! A*

Second Property is Thankfulness. A Holy Soul, under the Sense and Sight of Grace and Love so admirable, is sweetly influenc'd, not only

only to admire, but praise; and to pass from wondring at, to Thankfulness for the same. Thankfulness is a religious and grateful Acknowledgment of all the Love and Kindness of God to his Praise and Glory. Christian Assurance furnishes the Soul with manifold Motives and powerful Inducements to Praise and Thankfulness, and does mightily elevate and dispose the Soul thereto. Praise is the Work of Heaven. The Angels, who are happy in the Vision and Fruition of God there, are wholly taken up in framing Hallelujahs to the Honour of *Him who sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb who is worthy.* That holy Choir of Cherubims and blessed Seraphims, as they continually behold the Face of God, so they incessantly adore and praise his Perfections. Praise there is the only Note of Small and Great, of Saints and Angels, from the lowest to the highest Form and Order of 'em: even so it is very much the Work and Employment of Holy Souls on Earth, tho they do not come up to that pitch and height of Praise; nor is it possible that the Affections of our drossy Souls, whilst in this Body of Flesh, should be screw'd up so high, as to yield Notes as clear and harmonious, as those which are chanted forth by glorify'd Saints, and refin'd and pure Spirits; yet they will rise as high as they can in a delightful celebrating the Praises of God and the Lamb, imitating those of the Heavenly Region, tho as yet they can't reach the Degree and Perfection of their Praise. 'Tis confest that they above have got far before us, but holy and assur'd Souls are following hard after, and hope e'er long to arrive at the same Happiness; and then these shall render as perfect a Tribute, as those now do.

Rev. 4. 8,
9, 10.
Ch. 5. 11,
12, 13.

Psal. 63. 8.

- In the mean time this Assurance sweetly disposes the Soul to Praise and Thankfulness, and constrains us to say with the Apostle, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant Mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, and which fades not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us.* Such endeavour to
- 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4.** excite their Souls, as *David* did, saying, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless his Holy Name.* And this he lays down as the special Property of assur'd Souls, who of
- Psal. 103. 1, 2.** all others dwell nearest to God, to be still praising him. Also the ever-blessed Jesus had no sooner comforted the Hearts of his Disciples (who personated the Church of God) but we
- Psal. 84. 4.** read that *they worship'd, returning to Jerusalem with great Joy, and remain'd continually praising and blessing God; the very Emblem of Heaven it self.*
- Luke 24. 51, 52, 53.**

Assur'd Souls, like some Borderers on two Kingdoms, can't look either backward or forward, but they see what ravishes the Heart with Joy, and fills the Mouth with Praises. By casting our Eyes backward we may take a view of that deep Misery into which we were sunk by Sin, and how seasonably God *remember'd us*, and rais'd us out of that *low Estate*; how we were once pining away, and ready to perish for Hunger, and how he in great Mercy shower'd down his heavenly Manna upon us-to keep us from starving: What Slaves we were to our Lusts and Captives to Satan, in danger every moment to be haul'd to the infernal Den as a Prey to our Enemys; and how we were miraculously rescu'd by Christ, the Captain of our

Luk. 1. 74. Salvation, and *redeem'd out of the Hands of them who*

who hated us, and with *Israel* set safe on the other side of the deep Waters from the Fury of our Egyptian Pursuers. And shall not the Sense of this Grace of God, in dashing to pieces the Enemy with his own right Hand and stretch'd-out Arm, fill our Mouths as well as *Israel's* with triumphant Songs of Praise to him? yea, we will sing to the Lord, who has triumph'd gloriously. Exod. 15.
1, 2.

On the other hand it must produce Praises, if we look forward into the Celestial Country, the Heavenly *Canaan*, whither holy Souls are hastening; and take a View by Faith of the Immunities of it, where there is neither Sin nor Death, Sickness nor Pain, Hunger nor Thirst, nor any thing which afflicts the Inhabitants thereof: when we also consider its Royaltys, that there's Light without Darkness, shining forth in an everlasting Day; that there's an uninterrupted Peace and Joy, unfading Treasures and never-failing Pleasures; that there's a Fullness of Satisfaction to solace the Soul, and an eternal Delight in Fruition; that there the Inhabitants are every one crown'd with a Royal Diadem, and cloth'd with Glory more bright than the Sun in the Firmament: there we may hear such Melody, as will even ravish the Heart with Joy, and powerfully invite us to Praise in consort with them, who have every one their Harps, and sing forth Praises to God and the Lamb. This indeed seems to be the very End of God's furnishing the pious Man with Assurance, as the Royal Prophet acknowledges, saying, *Thou hast turn'd for me my Mourning into Dancing, thou hast put off my Sackcloth and girded me with Gladness, to the end my Glory (or Tongue) may sing Praise unto thee.* Psal. 30.
11, 12. And therefore his Resolution corresponds with God's Design herein; for he adds, *O Lord my God, I will give Thanks to thee for ever.* But

The Property of Assurance.

But to rest here in employing our Tongues to sing God's Praises, seems to be a Strain too low ; for the well assur'd and truly pious Man will rise higher, and celebrate his Saviour's Praise in a more extensive and excellent manner, endeavouring, thro the whole Course of his Life, to advance the Interest of God in the World. Verbal Acknowledgments, adorn'd with all the Wisdom of Man's Words, may amount to no more than Lip-Service, and such as is common to Hypocrites and Formalists ; but as that Tribute no way answers the Obligation of the Glory which the assur'd Man hopes for, he is resolv'd on doing more than so. Tho he can't reach the Note of Angels, yet he'l rise higher than that of Hypocrites.

- Josh. 1.5. Thus good *Joshua* having the Promise of God's Presence to lead and guide, to protect and save, to succeed and prosper him ; under the Assurance of so sweet a Promise he mounts high in purpose, resolving, whatever others do, that
- Josh. 24. he and his *House* will serve the Lord. Such will
25. do the less, but not omit the greater ; knowing
- Pf. 50.23. that *he who offers Praise, glorifies God*, and that *such as order their Conversations aright shall see (or enjoy) the Salvation of God* ; which pious and assur'd Men, as you have heard, will do. I pass to the

Third Property, which is Humbleness of Mind, lest the Soul should be in danger to be overturn'd under the Raptures and Triumphs of Joy, which has been fatal to some as Grief to others. The wise Lord has so order'd things, that for due poizing the Soul, and keeping the Balance even, Assurance is so temper'd, that it furnishes us with Matter not only of Thankfulness, but Humiliation. As it lifts the Soul high in Admiration and Thankfulness, so it

it lays it low in Humility. The more we see and know of God, taste the Sweetness of Divine Love, are admitted to the Views, and comforted in the Hope of Glory to come, the more humble it makes us, and hearty in renouncing all Self-worthiness; seeing all is Grace, and nothing of Merit.

Assurance of the Love and Favour of God works quite contrary to what the generality of Men think, and to the Excellencies of this World, in those who are possess'd with 'em. If a Man be reputed famous for Philosophy, renown'd for his Parts and Learning, and high in the Opinion and Account of others; how oft does he strut and swell to a mighty bigness in his own eyes, behave himself proudly from a vain Conceit of his own Worth and Excellency? If Men grow *rich in the World*, they are often *high-minded*, or else St. Paul had not directed Timothy to charge the contrary. But 'tis the

Nature of Grace to make lowly; and the higher a Man rises in the Assurance of Glory, the lower he sinks in Humility and Self-Abhorrence. Abraham was a Man high in favour with God, had many undoubted Notices thereof, dignify'd in his day above others, being stil'd the Friend of God; and God accordingly manifested himself to him by the Vision and Ministry of Angels, and would not hide from him the thing which he did. Yet when he intercedes with God on the behalf of Sodom, he us'd a Phrase most abasing and humbling: *I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord*, says he, *who am but Dust and Ashes*. Under all the choice Discoverys of God, he retains a Sense and Remembrance of what he was in his Original, *i. e.* Dust.

What an eminent Instance have we of this in holy Job, whose Assurance of the Goodness of his

his State was inferiour to that of none then living. The Lord himself testifies there was
 Job 1. 8. *none like Job in all the earth, who fear'd God and eschewed Evil.* This good Man the Lord suffer'd for wise ends to be grievously vex'd and afflicted by Satan, his implacable Enemy, who in his insatiable Malice stript him of his Children and Substance, which was great; he tormented him in his Body to such a degree, as render'd him more miserable than Death could do; blasted his Honour and Reputation, brought him into Contempt with the very Abjects, and was some way instrumental to influence his Wife to tempt him, and the Virtuous of his day to mistake his Case, and to interpret him to be a wicked Man and a Hypocrite; and that was more grievous to his righteous Soul than all the rest: But when the Scene of Job's Afflictions was withdrawn and over, God bless'd him with a double Portion of what he had before, and in a more than usual manner discover'd himself, his Love and Glory, to him: *I have,* says he, *heard of thee by the hearing of the Ear, but now mine Eye sees thee;* which Vision of God sunk him into the greatest Self-abhorrence: *Wherefore,* adds he, *I abhor my self in Dust and Ashes.*

Job 42.
5. 6.

How great an Instance also have we in that pious Man *David*, to this purpose, who was signally favour'd by the Lord, in raising him from the Sheep-fold to inherit the most glorious Throne then in the World; and that which is more, was renown'd for being a Man after God's own Heart. But notwithstanding this Divine Character, and Advancement to such Royalty, he remembers the Meanness of his Birth and Extraction in great Humility; saying, when he was clad in his Princely Pomp and

and Glory, *What am I, and what is my Father's House, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* 1 Chron. 17. 16, 17.

'Twas thus likewise with the Prophet *Isaiah*, who of all his Fellows was bless'd with the clearest Discovery of the *Messiah*, and by the Spirit of Christ help'd to express himself in a more Evangelical Strain than the rest; when he saw the Vision of the Lord Christ sitting on the Gospel-Throne, his Train filling the Temple, Seraphims attending, and that glorious Choir singing Anthems to his Honour, saying, *Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts*. This glorious Sight and Hearing, one would think, might have ravish'd his Heart, and fill'd him with Raptures of Joy. But alas! the vast Disproportion between him and those holy Creatures, put him on a Review of his own Vileness; under the sense whereof he in deep Humility cries out, *Wo is me! I am undone; I am a Man of unclean Lips, and I dwell among a People of unclean Lips, for mine Eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts*. Isa. 6. 5.

Also St. Paul, who for Revelations and glorious Manifestations came behind none before or since, being taken up into the third Heaven, where he saw Visions, and heard Words not possible to be utter'd, and was furnish'd of God so abundantly with his Grace and Spirit, that in point of Service and Suffering, he could without Ostentation say, that *he had done more than all the Apostles*; yet so mean and low was he in his own account, that he confesses himself *the least of all Saints*: which humble Expression of so great an Apostle can be no otherwise true (as I conceive) than as proceeding from an Apprehension of his own Unworthiness. 1 Cor. 15. 10. Eph. 3. 8.

But to conclude ; How fully is this verifys'd in our Blessed Saviour, who was the only begotten of the Father, had clear and undeniable Proofs of his being the Son of God, was a Person of infinite Worth, whom all the Angels of God did rightfully worship ; which might have rais'd him above entertaining any Thoughts about so vile a Creature as Man : yet notwithstanding this and more, he humbled himself to do the meanest Office for his Disciples in *washing their Feet*. Tho he was Lord of all, he took on him the Form of a Servant, and became obedient. So that you see Persons under the highest Assurance have been very humble ; and whoever by their Professions or Possessions, Privileges, Parts or Dutys, are made proud (whatever they think) their Assurance is not of the right kind. 'Tis no better than a Pharisical Presumption, and the Confidence of a Hypocrite. A

Joh. 13.5.
Phil.2.7,8

Fourth Property is Love. The Soul being on one hand transported with Joy and Praise to God, and depress'd on the other under a Sense of its own great Unworthiness ; must needs at last be fill'd with Divine Love, the Element in which Christian Assurance breathes. It can no more live in a Soul that's destitute of Love, than a Fish can live out of the Water. It originally proceeds from God, and abides only with them who love God. Every Heart which has it, is set on fire by some of those Sparks which fall from the heavenly Torch ; as St. John says, *We love him because he first lov'd us*. And when a Soul exercises Love to such a degree as evidences its Reality, God frequently makes those Visits and Discoverys of himself, that it usually grows up to Assurance ; as our Saviour

Joh. 4.
19.

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Saviour speaks, *If a Man love me, my Father will love him, and will come and manifest himself to him.* Joh. 14.21

Love is a Virtue which has an Excellency in it above others. How necessary soever Faith and Hope may be to us here, when we come to Heaven, Vision and Fruition will raise us above the Need and Use of 'em; but Love will accompany us not only into the Suburbs, but into Heaven it self: and there the Saints live more perfectly in the actings of it, as they are under more sensible Obligations; for the more we tast of Divine Goodness, and the clearer Views we have of God's transcendent Beauty and Amiableness, the more ardent will our Love be towards him. Now when the Beams of God's Love dart so powerfully on us, as to persuade our Hearts of the Goodness of our State, that we are savingly interested in the Lord Jesus, and are the adopted Sons and Daughters of God; 'tis certain there will be a Return of Love, without which we neither know God, nor are his Children. Joh. 4. 7, 8.

Having premis'd thus much in general, that Love is the inseparable Companion or Property of Assurance, 'tis now requisite that we proceed to shew when our Love is true; for Love has its Counterfeit. There is something which looks like Love, but is not what it would seem to be. Wherefore the Apostle says, *My little Children, let us not love in Word and in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth.* Should a Man take nothing but Counters for Gold, he would find himself wretchedly mistaken in the end.

Now if our Love to God be true, and not deservedly to be suspected, 'tis

1. General and comprehensive. 'Tis not a purblind Virtue, which can see only a little way, but of a piercing Eye and long Sight.

H 2

'Tis

'Tis not an hide-bound, narrow, and contracted thing ; but a noble and generous Grace, extending it self to all for their benefit, rendring us thereby like God, from whom it originally flows. Particularly, if our Love to God be true, we love his Word and Ways ; we meditate on his Word with Delight, and walk in his Ways with Pleasure, esteeming them above all others. And as they only lead to Life and Blessedness, Love accounts of 'em above Rubys, and desires 'em more than much fine Gold.

Also if our Love to God be true, we love our Brethren, the truly Godly, whatever Denomination they go under. Hence the Apostle *John* speaks of it as a thing not probable or possible, that a Man should love God whom he has not seen, if he loves not his Brother whom he has seen. All Saints are our Brethren, born of the same Father, Partakers of the same Divine Nature, and Heirs of the same Glory with us.

Yea, if we love God truly, we shall love our Neighbour because God has commanded it.

And St. *John* tells us, this is Love, that we keep his Commandments. Now by Neighbour we are to understand any Man, as our Lord has explain'd it in the Parable of the good *Samaritan* ; tho he be no way ally'd to us, but as he is of the same nature with us, we must do him all the good we can. Nay, if our Love to God be right, we shall love our Enemy also, so as to avoid all Revenge tho we have the upper-hand of 'em, to forgive Injurys, to shew 'em Kindness, and to pray for 'em ; wherein we shall shew forth the Virtues of our Holy Religion, and appear to be the Children of our Father who is in Heaven. 'Tis certain, the Love which Assurance works, fixes not on God and Christ as its only Object ; but it expresses a

Charity

Charity and Good-will towards Men, banishing all Dispositions of Mind, which render Men noxious and hurtful, and not a Blessing to one another. For St. James tells us, *Where Strife and Envy is* (which are directly opposite to Love) *there is Confusion and every evil Work;* things which have their Spring and Rise not from above, but from beneath. Those who are of an uncharitable Temper towards Men, whatever they imagine, shew that they have not true Love to God, and therefore can't pretend to good Grounds of Assurance.

2. 'Tis sincere, genuine, and hearty, in opposition to feign'd and hypocritical Love. *Grace be with all them who love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity: Thou shalt,* says our Saviour, *love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength.* Sincere Love seats it self in the Heart, and like a conquering Empress takes possession of, engages it for, and presents it whole and intire to God. 'Twas Israel's great Fault (like many in our day) that their Hearts and Mouths did not accompany each other. But how evil a thing is it, that the Heart, by reason of its dull and slow Motion God-ward, should by the Professions of the Mouth be so shamefully out-run! Israel was partial in their Love. Their Heart was divided between God and Baal. They halted, as Persons unresolv'd whose Votarys to be. Sometimes they were for God, sometimes for Baal. Of these God might have demanded, with infinitely more reason than Delilah of Samson, *How canst thou say, I love thee, when thy Heart is not with me?* What greater Evidence can there be, that thy Love is not genuine and hearty? Were it cordial, 'twould engage thee to make him a Present of thy whole Heart; and no Interest

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Ruth 1.
16, 17.

terest whatever could divide it, being united by the Bond of sincere Love. Souls which love God will cleave to him as Iron to the Loadstone; and under Discouragements will expostulate much as *Ruth* did with *Naomi*, saying, *Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, and thy People shall be my People, and nought but Death shall part thee and me.* These are Expressions which all speak forth the Truth of Love; and that Love which gives not God the whole Heart, is not such as it ought to be.

Hab. 3.
17, 18.

3. 'Tis Sovereign and Superlative. Tho a Christian is oblig'd to love many Persons and Things in the World, from the Ties both of Grace and Nature, as Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, House, Lands, and the like; yet he loves God only with a supreme Love, and all other things in subordination to him. Nay, he would be lov'd, tho outward Enjoyments were on the Wing, and leaving him; the fix'd Resolution of a gracious Soul being that of *Habakkuk*: *Tho the Fig-Tree blossoms not, and there be no Fruit on the Vine; tho the Labour of the Olive fails, and the Fields yield no Meat; tho the Flock be cut off from the Fold, and there be no Herd in the Stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.* If our Love ceases on the Stream of Mercy running low, and the Blessings of God's Goodness being withheld, so that we have not such sensible Tasts and Apprehensions as formerly, when the Candle of the Lord shin'd in the Soul, and Wind and Tide conspir'd to waft into the Port of our Possession all desirable Good Things; or if our Love to God arises only from the flowings in of his Favour, indulging us with his Kindness,

are

are we not mercenary? Do we not love our selves (at least) more than God?

We may lawfully, yea 'tis our Duty to love God for his manifold Benefits; and the more in number and excellent in nature they are, the higher should our Love mount, under such Emanations, towards him; as it did in David, who says, *I will love the Lord, because he hath heard (or answer'd) my Supplications.* No doubt that Holy Man lov'd God before in Truth and Sincerity; but from this renew'd Grace and Favour, his Affection mounts, and he's resolv'd, if possible, to love him more than ever. Also you have the Spouse rising in her Love from the same Consideration, attesting that *the Virgins love Christ, because the Savour of his good Ointment was pour'd forth.* But tho God is to be belov'd for the Blessings of his Goodness, yet true Love will eye God in Christ as its only Object: and a Sight and Knowledg of his surpassing Beauty and Excellency, raises to such a degree, as that in comparison of him an assured Soul will slight and contemn every thing short of him, and conclude with *Asaph*, of nothing in Heaven but God, and nothing on Earth to be desir'd beside him. God must be supremely lov'd, if truly lov'd.

4. 'Tis Active and Obedient. The great and constant Design of an affectionate Soul is to please God, who is the Object beloved; and all Love which runs not in this Channel, is deservedly to be suspected. This our Blessed Saviour renders certain beyond all dispute, saying, *If a Man loves me, he will keep my Word.* God's Law is now the Subject of our Meditation; and his Commandments, which were formerly grievous, now cease to be so. Now Christ's Yoke is made easy; and spiritual Work and Duty,

which naturally we have an Aversion to (whilst under the Dominion of the Flesh) is made delightful, and the loving Soul will vote with Prov. 3. 17 Wisdom, and pronounce *her Ways Ways of Pleasantness, and her Paths Peace.*

Love facilitates hard things, fills every Cup 1 Joh. 4. 18 with a pleasant Relish, expels Fear with the Gen. 29. Torment of it, makes long and tedious Services seem short and easy. Love sweetly disposes the Soul to move against the Torrent of all Obstructions, like the Fish which swims against the Stream, and makes us active in the face of danger. If God commands us to offer our I- Gen. 22. *saac*, we shall with *Abraham* do it. Tho Prayer 9, 10. to God should not only open Heaven, but the Lion's Den, and expose us to be cast as a Prey Dan. 6. 10. to those devouring Beasts with *Daniel*; Love will direct its Supplication to him; for, says Joh. 14. 24 Christ, *He who loves me not, keeps not my Sayings; i. e. Sayings which thwart a carnal Interest, which call us to deny Self, and require us and our Enjoyments to be at his Dispose, are disregarded only by disloyal Souls.*

5. 'Tis, or ought to be, durable and lasting; Hof. 6. 4. not like *Ephraim's* Goodness, which with the morning Cloud and early Dew pass'd away; but it remains and abides. There's the same Reason in God, why we should love him now as ever; and 'twill always continue without Change. Therefore we should be constant in the Exercise of our Love towards him; and 1 Cor. 13. 8 assured Souls will so love him: for *Charity never Cant. 8. 7. fails*; neither can many Waters quench Love, nor the Floods drown it. True Love is a Spark not to be extinguish'd, but increases into a Flame, which triumphs over the Waters of Affliction. A Soul maintaining Love in the Habit and Exercise of it towards God, is Cannon-Proof, fortify'd

tify'd against the Gun-shot of Affliction, and persuaded that nothing can separate it from the Rom. 8. Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Tho God 38, 39. should seem to cast away all Bowels, make his Rod lie heavy on us, feed us with the Bread and Water of Affliction, and make our Case as lamentable for sore and deplorable Distress, as that of God's People formerly; yet we should be like them who said, *Tho all this is Pl. 44. 17. come upon us, we have not forgotten thee, nor dealt 18. falsely in thy Covenant: Our Hearts are not turn'd back, neither have our Steps declin'd from thy ways.*

Thus may we try whether our Love be such as accompanies Assurance; and if at any time we find it declining, and our Souls abating the actings of it, let us use the Goad of heavenly Contemplation, taking a view by Faith of the Loveliness of God and Excellency of Glory; a sight whereof will afresh set the Heart a burning, constrain us to love to the end, knowing from Assurance of Hope that in the end we shall love without end. A

Fifth Property of Christian Assurance, is Labour and Industry after a higher pitch of Holiness, both of Heart and Life, than we have yet arriv'd at. As Assurance fills the Soul with Love to God and Christ, so Love arising from Assurance will not let the Soul rest, nor lie idle and unactive; but lets us know, whilst we are short of the Happiness of Heaven, we have the Holiness of Heaven to aim at. And tho we can't attain to the Perfection of it on this side that blessed Region, yet Assurance of that happy State will oblige us to come up as near the Mark, and to resemble the Holiness of Heaven as near as 'tis possible for us. As the Apostle presents to our View the pure, spotless, and perfect Righteousness of Christ, wherewith we

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we shall be cloth'd in the day of his appearing, when all our Spots shall be purg'd, and no Dust of Sin cleave to us; when all Inclinations to Evil will be drop'd by us, and abandon'd for ever; when *we shall be like him*, and eternally delight in the Views of him, *for we shall see him as he is*: so the Persuasion of this Happiness above the reach of all human Conception, will put assured Souls upon thirsting after, and engage 'em to the use of all Means to obtain it; it being the Property of *every one who has this Hope in him, to purify himself as God is pure*.

An assured Christian is an aspiring Christian. He accounts of the small Degrees of Grace and Holiness whereto he has arriv'd, as little or nothing, a Pitch too low to be rested in; and with holy Paul forgets the things which are behind, and reaches forth towards the things before, *pressing towards the Mark*. Mind, he presses forward, like a Man in a Croud, who labours to force himself thro. There are Crouds of Impediments and Mounts of Opposition in a Christian's way, arising from the Temptations of Satan, the Allurements of the World, and our own fleshly Lusts, inordinate Affections, which to conquer and break thro, so as not to be hinder'd by 'em, requires great Application; we must be actively industrious, resolute under Discouragements, and must constantly pray and strive.

Yea, a Christian (if occasion be) will sweat and bleed, as sometimes Men in a Throng do. The Mark is before him to which he is purpos'd to come, and he reaches forth and presses forward in order to his coming at it; and the Mark which assured Christians do thus vigorously labour to come to, is that perfect Pitch of Purity and Holiness which they shall attain in

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in the Resurrection of the Dead. No Measure Phil. 3. 11.
short of that will content 'em. While our Holiness is partial and imperfect, our Happiness is like to be so: but as the Views and Assurance of no Happiness short of the heavenly Felicity will satisfy such, so they breath forth ardent Desires after the Holiness of Heaven, and long to be sanctify'd throughout, in Body, Soul, and Spirit; can be pleas'd with no Degree and Measure short of that of beholding God's Face in Righteousness with *David*, who says, *Then shall* Pf. 17. 15.
I be satisfy'd, when I awake, with thy Likeness.

It being thus evident, that Holiness of Heart and Life is what an assured Soul vigorously labours for; that we may maintain a more sanctify'd Frame, and grow into a greater Conformity to God in Holiness, purifying our selves as he is pure, let us, 1. Be convinc'd of the Necessity of it. And 2. reverently use the Means afforded to attain it.

1. Let us know that it's necessary. That which is necessary to prepare us for the Happiness of Heaven, and without which there can be no Enjoyment of it, must needs be every way necessary to the Assurance of it. This Heb. 12. 14.
is agreeable both to the Maxims of Philosophy and Divinity; whence our Saviour argues: *Make the Tree good, and the Fruit will be good; for the Tree is known by its Fruit.* The sweet Fruit of Assurance will never be found growing on corrupt Trees; i. e. Men corrupt in Heart and Life, whoever they are, notwithstanding their present Advantages, if they so continue, may know themselves to be such as must shortly be cut down, and cast (as they will certainly) into everlasting Burnings. The Unholy Mat. 3. 10.
shall not see God (as before) the Unclean have no 7. 19.
Inhe-

Eph. 5. 5. Inheritance in his Kingdom: No, the Filthy, Unclean, and Abominable, must have their Part
 Rev. 21. 8. and Portion in the Lake which burns with Fire and Brimstone.

But on the other hand, mortify'd and holy Souls may rest confident that Heaven is a Mansion prepar'd and reserv'd for 'em, as they are the only qualify'd Subjects fitted for the Enjoyment of it, and for Communion with the holy Inhabitants of that blessed Region. Tho God
 Psal. 5. 4: has determin'd that the Unholy shall not dwell with him, yet the Holy shall: for the Question
 Pl. 24. 3, 4. being put, *Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy Place?* the Answer is, *He who has clean Hands, and a pure Heart, &c.* Which is verifi'd by our Lord Jesus,
 Mat. 5. 8. testifying, *That the pure in Heart are blessed, for they shall see God.* This, with what's said before, is sufficient to convince us of the Necessity of internal and external Holiness.

Now that we may attain it, let us with Diligence and Reverence use the Means propos'd, which are,

1. Conscientiously to compare our selves with God's Holy Word. The Word will discover Spots in the Soul, as a Glass does in the Face of him who beholds himself in it. The Apostle tells us, that *he had not known Sin, but by the Law.* The Law will make manifest to every Man the Truth of his own State, the Corruptions of his own Heart yet remaining as so many Blots to be purg'd away, which arise in us from unmortify'd Pride, Passion, Worldliness, Self-Love, Infidelity, and the like. The Reason of *Israel's* great Defection from God was their not using his Law, as a Glass to view their Hearts and Lives in. Had they compar'd themselves

selves therewith, it would have preserv'd 'em from those unreasonable Idolatrys whereinto they ran, on their estranging themselves from, and casting it behind 'em. Tho God wrote to Ephraim *the great things of his Law, he counted it as a strange thing,* or behav'd himself as a Stranger to it; and Israel cast it behind their backs, and so ran into Rebellion against God. Hof. 8. 12. Neh. 9. 26.

What more common with Men who reject God's Law as a Rule of Life, than to fall into gross Errors and strong Delusions, or into open and notorious Profaneness? Is not Contempt of God's Law, as it's contain'd in the Sacred Scriptures, the great Source and Spring of Deism, which leads some to the Neglect of all Worship, and to live as they list; and others to set up an Idol within, and worship they know not what? And as God has given us his Word, to make every Man manifest to his own Conscience, so also for a Rule of Life to direct us aright how to govern our selves for the acquiring a good degree of Purity and Holiness. This appears by the Resolution which David gives the Querist, demanding by what means *a Young Man may cleanse his Way*; which is particularly instanc'd in, because the Lusts and Propensions of Young Men are more lively, strong, violent, and impetuous, not easily broken off, nor the Pollution of 'em so easily avoided. Well, tho it be more difficult to master and subdue the Lusts and Passions of Young Men, whose Blood is hot and Spirits vigorous, yet here's a Remedy sufficient; which, if conscientiously attended to, will prove effectual, viz. *by taking heed to his Ways according to God's Word.* Again, *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimony of the Lord is sure,* Ps. 119. 9. 19. 7.

sure, making wise the Simple. And the Apostle declares the great Efficacy of it, and for what
 2 Tim. 3. 'tis profitable, viz. for Doctrine, Reproof, Cor-
 15, 16, 17. rection, Instruction in Righteousness, to render us compleat in every Good Work; and in fine, to make us wise to Salvation, thro Faith which is in Christ Jesus.

But 2. the Law being a School-master to bring us to Christ, let us by its Conduct be led to wash and bathe our defil'd Souls in the Blood of Jesus by Faith. Our Remission and Sanctification are both founded in his Blood, in which we may wash and be clean. Tho his Blood,
 1 Pet. 1. 18 wherewith we were redeem'd, be infinitely more valuable than Silver or Gold, yet poor believing Sinners may freely apply and make use of it; the Blood of Christ being that Fountain which God has set open, to the end Sin
 Zech. 13. 1 and Pollution may be purg'd: And 'tis certain, unless we wash in his Blood, our Filthiness will
 John 8. remain; we shall die in our Sins, and be miserable
 23, 24. without a saving Lot or Interest in him. Sin makes too deep a stain to be purg'd away by any thing short of the Blood of Christ, which only has power and virtue to cleanse from Sin and the Defilements of it. Tho we
 Jer. 2. 22. wash our selves in Nitre, and take much Soap, 'twill not do. The Blood of Bulls and Goats,
 Heb. 10. 4. the once valu'd and celebrated Sacrifices of the Law, is not sufficient. Nor is there a Purgatory after Death, which some in their Delusions dream of, to purge and take away Sin:
 Eccl. 11. 3. for as the Tree falls, so it lies; and as Death leaves us, Judgment will find us.

As nothing but Blood can purge Sin out of the Soul, so 'tis only the Blood of Jesus Christ which can do it; and in his Blood there's Power enough

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enough to master the greatest Sin, and Virtue to purge the deepest Stain. So that none need despair, tho their Sins are many and mighty; for it has cleans'd the most filthy, on the application of it by Faith, as the Apostle testifies to the Saints at *Corinth*, some of whom had been Sinners of the highest Rank; *Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, Effeminate*: yea, Sodomy reign'd amongst 'em, they being *Abusers of themselves with Mankind, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, Revilers, Extortioners*, and the like; *such were some of you*, says he, *but ye are wash'd, justify'd, and sanctify'd*. How? 'Tis in the Name (or Blood) of Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. Nor should the most Holy presume on any measure of Sanctity to which they have attain'd, without a Participation of the cleansing Virtue of his Blood; which St. John says (speaking of believing and holy Persons) *cleanses us from all Sin*. Let us therefore, when we are conscious of Filth contracted by any Sin, reverently and believingly have recourse to that Fountain, that we may be found of that number of whom the Elder speaks, saying, *These are they who have wash'd their Robes, and made 'em white in the Blood of the Lamb*.

1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11.

1 Joh. 1. 7.

Rev. 7. 14.

Heb. 10. 29

Rom. 7. 23.

3. Asever we would attain to Purity and Holiness, let's live a Life of Mortification; otherwise we shall profane that holy Blood, wherewith we were sanctify'd. What avails it, if after we are wash'd we return with the Sow to wallow in the Mire and Filth of Corruption? Tho Christ's Blood cleanses Believers from Sin, yet it does not totally remove the Being of Sin, but 'twill be sometimes stirring and striving to bring the Believer himself into Captivity to the Law of Sin and Death.

Death. 'Tis true, Victory over Sin is given us, and we are enabled to subdue it; but 'tis only by the Strength deriv'd from our Lord Jesus, in whom we have not only Righteousness, but Strength laid up for us. However, it must be our using the Power which we receive, to weaken and destroy Sin more and more, whereby the Work of Mortification is wrought. For tho a Man by the Strength of Christ be made more strong than *Samson*, yet if we indulge our Lusts, as he did his *Delilah*, we may be carry'd away by the *Philistines*. Therefore the Apostolical Injunction is, *Mortify your Members which are upon the earth*: and what *St. Paul* commends to others for so excellent an end, he diligently practis'd himself, in keeping under his Body, and bringing it into subjection; lest that by any means when he had preach'd to others, he himself should prove a Cast-away. To this add in the

4th place, Fervent Prayer to God, whose Blessing is needful to make all Means effectual for so pure a purpose. There's no Increase, but of and from him. He alone can teach us to profit by the Word. He only makes Christ over to the Believer and penitent Sinner, as well for Sanctification as Justification; and the Spirit of Grace is wholly at his dispose, by whose Divine Aid our sincere Endeavours in the Work of Mortification are made successful: so that without him we can do nothing. O be earnest with him to give thee his holy Spirit, by whose blessed Operation the Rubbish of Corruption will be more and more cast out of thy Soul. Pray that he would sprinkle clean Water upon thee; this he has promis'd: and with *David* say, *Create in me a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within me; purge me with*

Hysop,

Hyssop, and I shall be clean. And if our Prayers run parallel with Christ's Intercession in Heaven, we may comfortably conclude that God, who has promis'd, and is faithful to perform, ^{Heb. 10.} will, by his holy Spirit, purge all our Pollu-^{23.} tions, save us from our Uncleanesses; and according to St. Paul's Prayer for the *Thessalonians*, sanctify us throughout in Body, Soul, and Spirit; and so fill our Hearts with Assurance of that Happiness, which he is in a way of Holiness preparing and fitting us for. But I pass to the

Sixth Property, which is, longing of Soul and ardent Desire to be with God. You see Love is restless, and pleas'd with nothing short of Enjoyment. The twelve Spys, who were ^{Deut. 1.} sent to spy out *Canaan*, on their Return brought ^{24, 25.} with 'em some of its Fruit, by which they did not doubt to kindle in *Israel* strong Desires after that good Land; so doubtless the sweet Fruit of Assurance is given to work in us Desires suitable to the Goodness of the heavenly Country before us, where we shall be lodg'd in the Bosom of Love, and eternally delighted in the Fruition of that God and Christ which we are now longing for. When *Peter, James and John* had a Glimpse of Heaven's Glory at the Transfiguration of our Saviour, how were their Hearts ravish'd and overcome with it! Their nearness to Heaven, and the Sweets which they tasted, made 'em very loth to descend the Mount; and not being willing by any means to be remov'd thence, say they, *'Tis good for us to* ^{Mat. 17. 4.} *be here.* And St. Paul, who was taken up into the third Heaven, was so fir'd by what he saw and heard, that it wrought in him (when set down on Earth) never-dying Desires after a

||| Dwelling^a

Dwelling-Place in that blessed Region: How much soever the Interest of Christ and Weal of his Church might sway with him to abide here, **Phil. 1. 23.** yet the Affections of his Heart were restless, and the Motion of his Desires constant towards Christ, knowing that to be with him was best of all: Even thus holy Souls, furnish'd with Assurance, breathe forth their longing Desires to be with God, in whom they center; and to enjoy his Presence, which alone can satisfy 'em, both in his Ordinances, and in his Glory.

1. They desire his spiritual Presence in his Ordinances, knowing that these without him can yield no spiritual Nutriment. Serious and pious Souls have a mighty Veneration and Esteem for the Lord's Ordinances and Appointments; as we may learn from *David's Complaint* in the time of his Exile and Banishment, **Pf. 120. 5.** saying, *Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, and that I dwell in the Tents of Kedar!* This Complaint is grounded on his want of the Ordinances, not only as they are the Signs of God's Presence with his People, but the Ways wherein he manifests his Love and Glory to 'em, as he **Pf. 62. 1, 2.** elsewhere declares: *O Lord, thou art my God; early will I seek thee, as in a dry and thirsty Land where no Water is.* And why is the Prophet's Desire and Resolution thus? 'Tis to see God's Power and Glory, as he had seen it in his Sanctuary. **Pf. 42. 1, 2.** Again, *As the Hart pants after the Water-Brooks, so pants my Soul after thee, O God: When shall I come and appear before thee?* And the Spouse no less desirous of her Beloved, you find passionately suing to him, *Tell me, O thou whom my Soul loves, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy Flocks to rest at Noon; for why should I be as one who goes aside by the Flocks of thy Companions?*

Nothing

Nothing can quiet or satisfy a gracious Soul but the Presence of God.

2. The Desires of an assur'd Person are after the full and lasting Enjoyment of God in Glory. This is all his Desire, or the Top of it. Here holy Souls are often comforted with his Presence, taken into his Embraces, caress'd with the Kisses of his Mouth, ravish'd with his Heart-gladdening Countenance, refresh'd and satisfy'd with his Love. But, alas! this does not always continue. Our Beloved sometimes turns aside by reason of our unworthy Behaviour towards him, and that causes Bitterness of Spirit, Grief of Soul, working Sickness of Heart, which nothing can cure but a fresh Visit, and another Meeting with him; and therefore *David* cannot content himself with any degree of Enjoyment short of that in Glory, where there will be no parting: *As for me I will behold thy Face in Righteousness, I shall be satisfy'd when I awake with thy Likeness.* Then, and not till then, will the Desires of a gracious Soul be fully satisfy'd; as is further evident from the Temper of the Primitive Church, who when Christ gloriously enthron'd in the Heavens, publishes the joyful News of his sudden Return, saying, *Behold, I come quickly*; in Reply, ecchoes forth her Desire, *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.* Pious Souls wait for his Coming, and earnestly desire it with the Spouse, who thinking him long, and impatient of his Return, says, *Make hast, my Beloved, and be thou like a Roe and young Hart upon the Mountain of Spices.*

Thus have we done with the Propertys of Assurance, and shall now come to the last thing propos'd, which is to offer some Arguments, to move such as want Assurance to seek it, and

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to persuade such as have it to prize and keep it ; and shall then conclude with some Directions for obtaining it. The Arguments by which I would prevail with you to seek, prize and keep it, are taken from the *Necessity*, the *Excellency*, and the *Usefulness* of it.

First, Seek it because of its *Necessity*. I would not be here understood that Assurance is simply necessary to Salvation, as if none could be sav'd without it : for doubtless many, who were dear to God, have, when Death approach'd, and set 'em sensibly on the Borders of Eternity, had their Understandings so clouded, that they could see no Light ; and from their growing Fears have been ready to give up the Ghost, proclaiming with the dry Bones, *Our Hope is lost, and we are cut off*. Now, says the poor Soul, I see my Assurance formerly boasted of was but a vain and groundless Confidence, I must quickly inhabit the Confines of outer Darkness, make my Bed in everlasting Burnings, and there suffer a just and deserv'd Damnation for ever. Such an Apprehension as this many good Men may be under, being too apt to draw false Conclusions against themselves to their own Perplexity.

Sometimes this is occasion'd by the Workings and Temptations of a busy and malicious Devil, who well knows his time is short, and e'er long the Soul shall be rais'd above the reach of his longest Weapons ; and therefore he levels his Battering-Pieces, and makes these his last Efforts with the greatest Rage and Fury, resolving to disturb where he cannot destroy. And sometimes we are brought into Darkness and Doubtings by the Power of Diseases taking hold on us, which do not only weaken the Body,

dy, but spoil the Understanding, and produce an unaccountable Change in all the Facultys of the Soul ; and so being driven into Disorder and Confusion, various and frightful are the Ideas of a craz'd Fancy, by which we are inclin'd to conclude of our selves according to the dark Aspect with which things then appear, tho the Judgment which we then make is often false: For however dark and cloudy the State of God's Children may appear to be at such a time, 'tis certain they are by Grace beyond their own Expectation soon taken into the blisful Regions of Light and Glory.

But tho Assurance be not simply necessary, yet it's requisite that we seek and keep it on these two Accounts: 1. In Obedience to God. He who has graciously provided Heaven, and promis'd Salvation in the end, would not have us live without the Comfort of it in the way : and therefore he has given many Commands to seek and keep it; or else what's the meaning of those Expressions of the Apostle, *Examine 2 Cor. 13. 5. your selves, know you not your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be Reprobates?* Mark, examine and prove your own selves, there's the Precept commanding; and sure every Man in his right Wits will acknowledg it necessary to observe the Divine Statutes, and do our Duty, that by examining our selves, &c. we may know that Christ is in us, whose Indwelling in the Soul must persuade and assure our Hearts of the Safety and Goodness of our State. In like manner St. Peter presses this on us as necessary above other things, saying, *Give 2 Pet. 1. 5. all Diligence: for as it's no way becoming Saints who are call'd to Glory, and made Partakers Ver. 3, 4. of the Divine Nature, to give way to Sloth and*
I 3 Carelesness,

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Carelesness in Duty ; so 'tis requisite, in Obedience to God, that we apply our selves with the greatest Industry to seek and maintain an Assurance of Heaven ; to which end he repeats
 Ver. 10. the Injunction, *Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure.*

2. Assurance is necessary, because without it the best of Men live in a perplex'd Uncertainty what their Condition must be for ever. This World does little else than chime Changes on us ; and every day's Experience tells us that nothing is certain, but Uncertainty ; that there is no fixedness of State to be arriv'd at
 Pl. 39. 5. below the Sun, and that Man in his best Estate is but Vanity ; *i. e.* subject to be cut off in the height of his Prosperity, tho he fancys with
 Pl. 30. 5. *David* that his Foundation stands sure, and
 Job 29. that he shall not be mov'd ; or with *Job*, that he shall die in his Nest. But tho good Men sometimes exercise such a Confidence as this, from a Series of Successes, and Confluence of good things attending 'em ; yet it may be said of all earthly Prosperity, that 'tis uncertain and certainly short, since Fulness of Trouble,
 Job 14. 1. and Fewness of Days, is the Lot of every Man that's born of a Woman.

How soon did *David's* Sun set in a Cloud, who had no sooner utter'd his Confidence from his flourishing Condition, *Lord, by thy Favour thou hast made my Mountain to stand fast*, but with the next Breath he tells us, that God did
 Pl. 30. 7. *hide his Face, and he was troubled.* And are not the best of Men subject to the like Vicissitudes and Changes ? No human Excellency, as Royalty, Wisdom, Power and the like, can garison us against Trouble and Disappointment.

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How suddenly oft-times is our Calm turn'd into a Storm, and blustering Tempests blow our serene Minds into Disorder and Fear. And when we are under such Discomposure of Spirit, we are apt to perplex our selves with Conceits and Jealousys, as if with *Asaph* we had cleans'd our Hearts in vain, and that it's to no purpose that we have wash'd our Hands in Innocency. Ps. 73. 13.

Now as an Anchor is necessary to keep the Ship steady and secure, whilst lying among Rocks in a stormy and tempestuous Season; so we say of Assurance, as *David* of *Goliath's* Sword, None like this. None like this, to keep us calm and quiet under tempestuous Storms, fretting Perplexitys, and galling Disappointments; none like this, sweetly to persuade the Soul, that it shall go well in the end. Wherefore the Apostle tells the Christians, that they have *Hope as an Anchor to the Soul, both sure and stedfast, entering within the Veil.* The Wicked, I confess, may know what his State shall be hereafter without difficulty, since *St. Paul* says of the *Unrighteous*, that they shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and the Royal Prophet is positive, that the *Wicked shall be turn'd into Hell.* 1 Sam. 21.
Ira. 3. 10.
Heb. 6. 19.
2 Cor. 6. 9.
Psal. 9. 17.

But 'tis not so easy for a pious Man in hurrying Revolutions, when between Hope and Fear, to resolve himself in a matter of such Moment where Assurance is wanting.

Moreover, that it's necessary is evident from *David's* praying so earnestly to God for it: *Restore to me,* says he, *the Joys of thy Salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.* Oh 'tis this, as if he had said, which shall rejoice my broken Bones, resolve my Doubts, revive my drooping Spirits, and comfort me in a well-grounded

Confidence of awaking in God's Likeness, and being eternally satisfy'd in the Enjoyment of my God. I pass now to a

Second Argument, to seek and keep this Assurance, taken from the Excellency of it. Whatever we deem excellent, we'll take Pains to get it; for the very Notion of Excellency, in any thing which we want, makes us willing to do any thing or part with any thing less excellent or valuable to gain it; as when *St. Paul* understood the transcendent Excellency which is in Christ, he was willing to part with all his boasted Privileges, his own pretended Righteousness, with whatever had been or was reputed gainful to him, for *the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*; and accounted all as no better than *Dung, that he might win him*. Now that there is an Excellency in this Christian Assurance, I shall make plain in shewing,

1. What 'tis to us. 2. What it does for us.

As for the former: (1.) 'Tis a special Character of the Love of God, an Earnest of the Inheritance which is purchas'd by the Blood of Jesus, and a Seal of the Spirit upon our Hearts, whereby we are seal'd or settled in a comfortable Hope of Eternal Life. 'Tis an Evidence to us that we are the Children of God, of the Heavenly Race, that we belong to the Family above, and have our Names written in the Book of Life; which to know, is Ground and Matter of more abundant Joy, than if the Devils and all the Powers of Darkness were subject to us.

Assurance is the Morning-Star which Christ has promis'd, noting to us the Approach and Dawning of an everlasting Day, a Day which shall be succeeded by no Night of Darkness or Trouble.

Trouble. 'Tis the hidden Manna, more precious than that which *Israel* partook of in the Wilderness, whereby we shall be nourish'd and comfortably kept to the Day approaching; yea 'tis that white Stone, with a new Name engraven on it, which none can read or know save he that has it. In fine, 'tis a sure Pledg of our Marriage-Union with God and Christ, which is by far a more blessed State than Crowns or Kingdoms could put us in. And as is our Condition, so is our new Name, *Hephzibah*, which signifys *God's Delight in us*. All *Isa. 62. 4.* this, and more than this, is the Assurance of the Love of God to us, and therefore excellent: And its Excellency will further appear if we consider;

(2.) What it does for us, which in short is more than all the World either will or can do for us, as it's an Evidence to us of our heavenly Descent, that we are the Sons and Daughters of the God of Heaven. This will bring us within the Views of the Celestial Glory; not to *Sinai*, where God shew'd his Glory, and utter'd his Voice in the Terrors of Lightning *Exod. 19.* and Thunder, which made the Mount to quake, *16, 17, 18.* and the Hearts of the People tremble; nor to Mount *Tabor*, where the Sight of Christ's Glory in his Transfiguration, and the Voice which was heard from Heaven, struck the Disciples *Mat. 17.* down, and fill'd 'em with Confusion and Fear: but 'twill place us in, and make us inhabit the very Porch of Heaven, whence by Faith we shall cast an Eye within the Veil, and there behold the Face of God smiling on us, the Arms of Christ open to receive us, and hear the Melody of Songs sung in the height of *Sion*; a Sight and Hearing which will strangely charm us,

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us, ravish our Hearts, and sustain us in the Raptures of unexpressible Joy.

- You know 'tis common for Parents to look pleasantly on their Children, to show 'em their Glory and Riches, and to tell 'em, this is all for them. Much more will God, who has begotten assur'd Souls to the lively Hope of
- 2 Pet. 1.4. an Inheritance incorruptible, and reserv'd in Heaven, admit 'em to a Sight of it. This is intimated by the Evangelical Prophet, who
- Isa. 33.17. says, *Thine Eyes shall see the King in his Beauty, and behold the Land which is afar off.* I conclude this with the Apostle's Words in another
- Phil. 4. 8. Case, *If there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these things.* If there be any Excellency in this Assurance, let such as want it seek it, and such as have it prize and keep it. I pass to the

Third Argument, which is taken from the *Usefulness* of it, which indeed is a further Evidence of its Excellency; for the more useful any thing is to us, the more we value it. Let us therefore seek and prize this Assurance, as 'twill be very serviceable to us for these following Purposes.

1. 'Twill mightily wean us in our Affections from the things of the World, and help us to account of 'em as poor, mean and worthless, as things not worthy of our Love, to be doted on, or follow'd after; as things, without which we may and shall be happy. Assurance will not only shew us the Emptiness of 'em, but that they may prove pernicious and hurtful; as the young Man in the Gospel, *Demas* and many others, found by Experience. 'Twill have a mighty Influence on us in the two great and common Conditions of our Lives, viz. Prosperity

perity and Adversity: In Prosperity 'twill ballast the Heart aright, that it ben't overset by the pleasant Gales of a flourishing State, and moderate its Desires after lawful things, as having things infinitely more valuable in Prospect. And in Adversity, when the Waves and Billows of Affliction rise and lift up themselves, even then 'twill keep us from sinking into those amazing Fears, tormenting Grievs, and sinful Despondings, which are common to such as are not under the happy Effects of Christian Assurance.

This will strengthen and comfort their Hearts in such a season, in effect saying to believing Souls, *Fear not: Be of good Courage: Isa. 41. 10. Hope in God: He is thy God: He will save thee. Pl. 27. 14. & 42. 5. & 55. 16.* 'Twill help us to know that we are Strangers and Pilgrims here, strongly persuade us of a better Country to come, and fix our Eye upon the Celestial City. I have read of a devout Pilgrim, in his Travel to Jerusalem, who passing thro many Citys, which presented to his View choice Monuments, and rare Sight of various kinds, overlook'd 'em all, and without any regard to 'em, pass'd on, saying, *This is not Jerusalem, This is not Jerusalem.* So will assured Souls much more say of the Pleasures, Profits, and the Glory of the World, These are not the Pleasures, Treasures and Glory of Heaven, the Country towards which they are travelling: They'll contemn 'em, and with holy Paul in some measure affirm, *I am crucify'd with Christ, Gal. 2. 20. by whom I am also crucify'd to the World, and the World to me. 6. 14.* I say, this Assurance is useful to mortify our Desire of the World, and the things of it.

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2. 'Tis useful to quiet and satisfy us under all Losses and Hardships which we may sustain and suffer for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. O this will sweeten every bitter Cup, lighten every Burden, fit every Yoke to our Shoulders! This will turn our Wormwood and Gall into Milk and Honey; 'twill procure us Liberty in Confinement, and fill our Hearts with Joy, and our Mouths with Songs of Praise, tho' our Loins were gall'd with heavy Shackles, and our Feet made fast in the Stocks, as *Paul's* and his Companions were. This will make us content with a little, and not only so, but to take joyfully the spoiling of our Goods, knowing that in Heaven we have a better and more enduring Substance.

Ast. 16. 25.
Phil. 4. 11.
Heb. 10.
34.

Assurance will be an Antidote against Discontent, while it gives us a Glimpse of Heaven, of a firm and unshaken Kingdom there, of an unfading Crown and Inheritance there; and persuades us that 'tis a Country worth our most painful Travel, and the Things of it worth our Suffering for, and which will make us amends for all our Losses. Hence 'twas that St. Paul, and the Saints of his day, reckon'd the Sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compar'd with the Glory which should be reveal'd; and said, their light and momentary Afflictions work'd for 'em a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. Nay, this animated our blessed Saviour himself, of whom we read, that for the Joy which was set before him, he endur'd the Cross, and despis'd the Shame. And that Heroic Servant of his, Moses, esteem'd the Reproaches of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt, while he had an eye to the Recompence of Reward. Thus Assurance is useful to us in suffering Times.

Rom. 8. 18.

2 Cor. 4.
17, 18.

Heb. 12. 2.

Heb. 10.
25, 26.

3. 'Tis

3. 'Tis useful to advance Piety, and to engage us in a strict and conscientious Performance of Duty towards God. A Soul, made glad by Assurance of the Divine Love, can't but testify of God's Ways, that they are all *Prov. 3-17.* Ways of Pleasantness, and Paths of Peace. No Ways lead to so blessed an End, no Work is crown'd with so glorious a Reward, as Assurance persuades us the Work of God and Duty shall be. Tho Duty is by most counted a Burden, 'tis not so in the Judgment of assur'd Souls: For, says the Apostle, *This is the Love of 1 Joh. 5-3.* God, that we keep his Commandments; and his Commandments are not grievous. St. Paul, speaking of the Resurrection from the Dead, tells us, that from his Hope thereof he *exercis'd himself Act. 24. 16.* always to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God and Men.

The same Apostle elsewhere says, *The Love 2 Cor. 5-14.* of Christ constrains us; whereon I'll give you the Comment of one whom I have read as follows: "Why art thou so painful a Minister Paul? Why knowest thou no Man after the Flesh? Why not led by carnal Interests and Affections? Why so busy and diligent, as that all the World counts thee mad? Why," says he, Love will not let me rest. If I would be lazy, or carnal, or fold my Hands to sleep, the Love of Christ always sounds this in my Ears, That I was dead, and he died for me, that henceforth I should not live to my self, but to him who died for me. This also is the Use which Zacharias made of the Assurance which God had given by his Oath to their Fathers, *That being deliver'd out of the Luke 1.* Hands of their Enemys, they should serve him in *74, 75.* Righteousness and Holiness all the Days of their Lives.

4. Assu-

4. Assurance will fit us for any place, and make us serviceable wherever we live. He whose Heart is affected with the Assurance of Heaven, is qualify'd for any place, whether of Plenty or Scarcity; also to sojourn with any sort of Persons. If they be wicked and profane, he'll lovingly tell 'em the danger of such Courses, that they lead down to Death; and if they will not refrain, he'll prudently reprove
- Eph. 5. 11. their Works of Darknes. If Worldlings, whose Discourses are about, and Endeavors after nothing but the things of the Earth, he'll
- Pf. 4. 6, 7. with *David* expresse that Divine Option, *Lord, lift up the Light of thy Countenance on me*; 'tis that in which I'll rejoice more than in *Corn, Wine and Oil*. And as it fits us for any Company, so 'twill make us serviceable and beneficial, by wholesom Counsel and Admonition
- 1 Pet. 3. 1. (as *Noah* to the old World) by holy and godly Example, whereby many may be won who will not be persuaded by the Word; by fervent
- Pf. 106. 23 and prevalent Prayers, like *Moses* standing in the Gap to turn away Wrath from a rebellious *Israel*; and by a liberal distributing of what we have to refresh the Bowels of the Needy, and make their Hearts to sing for Joy; and so
- Job 29. 12, 13, 15, 16. like *Job*, becoming *Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lamé*, and eminently useful in our Places.
5. Assurance is useful to our Growth and Perseverance in Christianity and Godliness, and to keep us from all Apostacy and Defection. Thus *St. Peter* argues, *Give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure*; and if that be done, says he, *ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful*. No, no, assur'd Souls will retain the
- Pf. 92. 12, 13, 14. Juice of Grace, will be fat and flourishing like the *Palm-Tree*, and grow like the *Cedars in Lebanon*,

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non, and bring forth Fruit down to old Age. Tho Storms and Tempests rise, which perhaps bring down the strong and mighty Oaks, even the most flourishing Professors in Appearance, and blow serious Souls to the very Mouth of Danger, yet then will Assurance enable these to lift up their Heads with Joy, and stand fast; tho the most blustering Hurricanes beat upon 'em, they will not be mov'd: no, whoever does, they will never fall. A Soul living within the Views of Heaven and Glory, will rather rejoice in Tribulation, than turn their Backs on the Hope set before 'em, tho all temporal Interests should sollicit thereto. 2 Pet. 1. 8, 10. Rom. 5.3.

6. Assurance of Heaven and Glory will sweetly dispose us for a Journey thither, and incline us willingly to die that we may enter that happy Region. There's nothing like Assurance to guard us against the fiery Sting, to arm us against Fear, to disrobe Death of all its Terrors, and to present that terrible Executioner to human Nature, with a less frightful Aspect than in common he appears. The great Reasons why so many Christians are unwilling to die, are the little Acquaintance and Communion which they have with God, want of believing Views of the excellent things prepar'd in Heaven, and the Weakness of their Hope that those things are prepar'd for them; but Assurance of this would make us willing to be gone, and cause us to say with good old *Simoon* (having Christ in his Arms) *Now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace, for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation.* Luke 2. 29, 30. And whatever may be our Straits about beloved Relations, and other Interests here, which naturally we are loth to leave; yet Assurance of the transcendent Excellency

cellency of Christ and Glory will soon bring the Soul to a determination, to desire with St. Phil. 1. 23. *Paul* to be dissolv'd and to be with Christ, which is best of all.

Thus have I done with the Arguments by which I would persuade such as want Assurance to seek it, and such as have it to prize and keep it; for amongst all other things I dare venture to say this is the one thing needful, as 'tis useful and beneficial in every State of Life, and in Death it self, as you have heard.

I should now pass to the Directions, and so conclude the first general Part. But methinks here lies something worthy to be resolv'd and remov'd out of the way before we proceed, doing which may be serviceable to many who grant, from what has been said, that Assurance is a very desirable thing, and worthy of our whole Industry to get and keep it; but yet are ready to object, That tho it were possible to arrive at this Assurance of Hope, yet 'tis hard, nay impossible, to maintain and keep it, as we may gather from the Outcry of many sanctify'd and holy Souls in our Day, who under the Torment of Fear can't possibly be comforted, but draw fearful Conclusions against themselves, saying, The Days of Darknes are coming on apace, 'tis not long e'er I must sink down under the weight of God's wrathful Displeasure, and make my Bed in everlasting Burnings. My Sins are too heavy for me. God has forsaken me. My Hope is perish'd, and I am lost.

Yea many of the choice and most eminent Saints of God in Ages past, we find upon Record pouring forth their Complaints in like manner as *Job*, *Oh that 'twere with me as formerly, when the Candle of the Lord shin'd upon me,*
and

and by his Light I walk'd thro Darkness. Now the Case is quite alter'd; for, says he, When I look'd for Good, then Trouble came, my Bowels boil'd and rested not, I went mourning without the Sun. I am a Brother to Dragons, my Skin is black upon me, my Harp is turn'd into Mourning, and my Organ into the Voice of them that weep.

David also says, I am forgotten, like a dead Ps. 31. 12. Man out of mind: I am like a broken Vessel. Again, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Ps. 22. 1. me? Why art thou so far from helping me? Has Ps. 77. 9. God forgotten to be gracious, has he in Anger shut up his tender Mercys? And the Church harps upon the same String, Wherefore dost thou forget Lam. 5. us for ever, and forsake us so long time? Thou 20, 22, hast utterly rejected us, and art very wrath against us. Thus it has been with many dear to God in days past, and thus it may be with many now; their Hearts are set a trembling, their Faces cloth'd with Paleness, and their State is deplorable, as they conceive.

Now for the Cure and Removal of this Malediction, which renders the Spirit of serious Souls sometimes very disconsolate, we shall, 1. Enquire into the common Causes of it. 2. Caution against a few things which are great Hindrances to this Assurance of Hope. And, 3. Proceed to the Directions requisite to be observ'd for obtaining it.

We are first to enquire into the common Causes of this disconsolate State, why many truly godly, and it may be some of the greatest Eminency for Piety, do fall into such uncomfortable Reasonings, and in despondency of their Spirits draw Conclusions so false, as they often do, both of God and themselves; and whatever the Cause be, I may truly tell you,

'Tis not from God. He must not be charg'd with it, who is the God of Peace, and does not
 Lam. 3. 23. *afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men;*
 Isa. 67. 9. *but is rather afflicted with 'em in all their Afflictions.*

Nor is it owing to a Religious Life, tho some have without Trial imagin'd, and ground-
 lessly concluded, that Godliness is little or no-
 thing else than devoting our selves to the Seve-
 ritys of a strict, austere, and melancholy Life.
 I confess, the Precepts of Christianity are le-
 vel'd at Sin, and form'd with design to take us
 off from affecting the Jollity, Mirth, and Plea-
 sure springing from a sinful Course, which is
 a Joy very transient, and ends in Trouble; but
 then there is a Peace and Pleasure infinitely
 more valuable to be enjoy'd therein.

Godliness is the most pleasant Air we can
 breathe in. It maintains a healthful Constitu-
 tion, furnishes us with every thing necessary to
 1 Tim. 4. 8. *an intire Satisfaction, as it has the Promises of*
this Life and that which is to come. It procures
 Prov. 12. *us a good Reputation, and clothes us with an*
 26. *Excellency above that of others.* 'Tis an Evi-
 dence of our being like God, and a Witness to
 us that we please him; which powerfully tends
 to make us peaceful and pleasant, and also to
 keep us in that happy Frame and Temper; as
 is plain from God's own Testimony, and the
 Experience of all who have observ'd the Up-
 shot of a godly Life: For, says David, Great
 Ps. 119. *Peace have they who love thy Law, and nothing*
 165. *shall offend 'em:* And, Mark the perfect Man, and
 Ps. 37. 37. *behold the upright, for the end of that Man is*
Peace. But on the contrary, whatever Peace a
 wicked Man may possess in sinful ways, 'tis not
 worthy of that Name, as being a mere Coun-
 terfeit,

terfeit, and not a real Peace: For *there is no Peace, says the Lord, to the Wicked.* Is. 48. 22.
57. 21.

That pious Men therefore at any time fall into such uncomfortable Despondencys, flows not from God or Godliness. Who then is it from? Satan? No. He has Will to do that and more, but his Head and Power is broken by Christ the Captain of our Salvation. He has only the Power of tempting left him. He's utterly unable to withstand the resolute Encounters of a believing Soul; for if we resist, *Jam. 4. 7.* he flees. He can't hurt us without our Consent. Therefore I say, 'tis wholly in and from our selves, and is generally owing to some of these four things, *viz.* *Unbelief*, or Weakness of Faith; *Melancholy*; the *Irregularity of our Passions*, when touch'd with some sad Accident; or the *stirring of Corruption* in us.

First, Unbelief is a great Spring whence Sadnefs and Misery flows, as it lays Persons open to the Frowns of an angry God here, and liable to the Displeasure of incens'd Justice for ever: But by Unbelief I don't now mean the total Absence of Faith in God and Christ, but a ceasing of the Acts and Exercise of it in certain respects in the Soul. The glorious Effects of Faith are many; it enlightens, upholds, strengthens and comforts, whilst we live in the actings of it. But nothing can be more conducive to weaken our Hands, discourage our Hearts, and destroy our Hope, than sinking into Unbelief, by remitting the Exercise of that heroick Grace in the Soul. When God treated with erring *Judah*, under the Encouragement of taking 'em graciously into his Favour, what but Unbelief made 'em say, *There is no Hope?* *Jer. 18. 12*

All our Qualms and Faintings, our Fears and Despondings, are from the Weakness of our Faith: for, says *David*, *I had fainted unless I had believ'd.* 'Twas this made *Peter*, walking on the Sea, to sink into Fear and Doubting. As his Faith fail'd, he sank. 'Tis this which takes us off from our Hope in God in a time of Danger; this, founding a Retreat, causes the Soul to desert and leave him, the only Fountain of Life and Comfort. Hence the Apostle *Heb. 3. 12.* cautions the Saints against it; *Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God.* Neglecting the Actings of Faith, is the first Cause to which a Christian stands indebted for all that ruinous Work made in his Assurance by Fears and Doubts.

Secondly, Another Cause is *Melancholy*, a very common and uncomfortable Distemper; under the Malignitys whereof, the clearest Understanding is so clouded, that Persons of the best Judgment are wholly incapable of making any true and safe Judgment of themselves: For this black Humour, wherever it prevails, extending it self thro the whole Body, thereby affects the Spirit, and presents every thing to the Mind in its own Colours. It throws all within into a Chaos, spreads a dark Cloud over the discerning Faculty, fills the Mind with Fears and Jealousys; so that it never, or very rarely, frames an Idea, but what is dismal and frightful. This Humour in Scripture seems to be call'd an *Evil Spirit*, from the evil Effects which it produces and where it predominates, the most pleasant Sights and sweetest Melody can yield little or no Relief, or at best but for a little time. It fixes Error in the Understanding, and subjects

Reason

Reason to the Impositions of a craz'd Fancy. It ascribes an evil Event to every Occurrence, fears every thing which presents, without any cause. It torments Persons with fear of things at a distance, and which perhaps never happen; and turning Good into Evil, hinders 'em from rejoicing in the Good they enjoy.

Melancholy sometimes fills good Mens Minds with horrid and monstrous Notions of God, as if he were cloth'd with nothing but what renders him dreadful and terrible; as also of themselves, as if they were blasphemous Wretches, little better than Devils: and in the perplexity of disturb'd Minds, they spend their time in endless and unnecessary Scruples. In fine, it renders 'em unfit for Prayer to God, and other holy Dutys, and then interprets that Aversion to be a Mark of their Reprobation: and such often and clamorously cry out (in this their great Dolour) *God has forsaken me*; with a great many more Complaints of this kind, without any reason but what's purely from their fantastick Conceits.

This is an Evil which persuades us only to believe what is not. However, 'tis but a Lamb in a Bear's Skin, which frights more than it hurts: and tho the State of such as are afflicted with it is much to be pity'd, yet their Sentence and uncomfortable Conclusions are not to be credited or regarded, they themselves being of another mind when the Disease is remov'd; which argues beyond contradiction the Cause lies in the Distemper, since the Effects vanish with it. The Cure of this I leave to a humble waiting upon God by Prayer, with Faith and Patience, and to such Methods as skillful Physicians shall direct.

The Plow Man's Complaint

Thirdly, Another Cause is the *Irregularity of our Passions*, when touch'd with some sad Accident or Change of State. We are naturally apt to think when it's well with us, that 'twill be always so; and the higher we rise in such a Conceit, the more grievous 'tis to be brought under a Change, whether from Health to Sickness, or from Liberty to Confinement. Danger presenting from Enemys and Evils, the Prosperity of the Wicked whilst the Church of God has been under the Pressures of wasting Calamitys, and such-like things, have oft given occasion of stumbling, even to the Godly themselves; so that being driven into Disorder by the Power of ruffling Passions, they have in an angry Mood spoken things very unadvis'd and false.

Asaph when afflicted wax'd *envious* at the Prosperity of the Wicked, and rashly concluded that Religion and Godliness were mere Vanity; **PL. 73. 13.** saying, *Verily I have cleans'd my Heart in vain.* Nor was *David* less faulty in this matter, as he **PL. 31. 22.** himself acknowledges; *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.* He said it indeed, but 'twas in his haste; and what was concluded by both these was false, as they themselves immediately confess'd.

Again, you have *Asaph's* mournful Expostulation rising up to a hasty and rash Conclusion intimated in his Interrogations: *Will the Lord* **PL. 77. 7.** *cast off for ever; and will he be favourable no more?* **8, 9, 10.** *Is his Mercy clean gone for ever? Does his Promise fail for evermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his tender Mercies?* Thus for the present he concludes; but he quickly recovers himself, and corrects his Mistake, saying *This is my Infirmity.* Mind, he attributes it to

his Frailty and Passion. And thus you see how good Men are hurry'd into Extremes, thro Unevenness of Temper and Power of Passion; which indeed renders not only Reason, but Faith it self for a time useless to the Soul. Both must stand mute, whilst Passion is paramount.

In a calm and prosperous State, how apt are we to soar aloft on the Wings of Peace and Joy, triumphing in Assurance of Hope! But if we are touch'd sensibly with any Cross, how flat do we fall! Our Hope vanishes, and Fear takes place. So that whilst we are so fickle and uneven in our selves, there's no reason to imagine that our Assurance should be even and constant, any more than that one and the same Effect should proceed from contrary Causes; which shews that this Unevenness of Temper is a great Obstruction to the Peace and Joy of pious Men.

Now for redressing this Evil, consider,

1. Do Children, when they are corrected by their Fathers on earth (tho possibly more from Humour than Reason) conclude they'll disown and throw 'em out of doors? No. May not God then correct a Child, without casting him off? and chastise a Son, without disinheriting him?

2. Should not our Relation to God as Children, oblige us to Patience under every Correction; since he never corrects, but there's II. 27. 9. need of it, either for purging away our Faults, Heb. 12. 10 or furthering our Piety?

3. What get we by wrangling and struggling with our Father correcting us, unless more angry Frowns and heavier Strokes from his Hand?

4. Would not a patient and quiet Submission to his Will in correcting (by what means soever) in conformity to the ever-blessed Jesus, tend mightily to our Father's Honour, the Reputation of our Holy Religion; to preserve our Peace with him more constant, and make our Assurance of his Favour under all Events more strong and certain? If so, let us refrain in this matter, wherein naturally we are so apt to miss it. •

Fourthly, Another Cause why Good Men are so sad, ready to despond and give up all Hope, is the *stirring of Corruptions* in 'em, which powerfully excite to Evil, and all conspire to carry the Soul captive to Sin and Death. How do they war with us, and fight against us? one or other of 'em being always on the watch to take the Soul at a disadvantage; sometimes provoking to Pride and Vain-glory, whereby we arrogantly assume that to our selves which belongs not to us, and think better of our selves than we ought to think; sometimes to Wrath and Anger, to Cruelty and Revenge, to Levity and Filthiness in Conversation, to Rioting and Drunkenness, to Chambering and Wantonness, to the Love of the World, and an Indifferency in Religion and Godliness.

These things, says the Flesh, we may do, as well as some of the Godly have done in Ages before us, and continue the Children of God as well as they did. These sorts of Lusts stir in us; and O how do they grieve a pious Soul! and bring Fears and Faintings upon the Spirit, like formidable and merciless Adversarys, who not only besiege the City without, but secretly lurk and take up their Quarters within,

in, waiting for an opportunity to betray it into the hand of the Enemy without.

These are those Sons of *Anah*, by whose hands we sometimes fear we shall one day perish, as *David* fear'd he should by the hand of *Saul*. 1 Sam. 27. These are those Sons of *Zeruiab* who trouble us, disturb our Peace, and spoil our joy. But tho these Lusts stirring in the Soul may find us some Trouble, some Work and Exercise to mortify and prevent their giving us that Diversion from God and Duty which they would; yet they need not terrify us with Fears, or occasion us in Distress of Soul to conclude, that because they are present with us, God will leave us; because they cleave to us, God will forsake us. Notwithstanding these Fogs and Mists which arise from the Puddle of Corruption, we may live within the Views of Heaven by Faith, and keep our Assurance strong and vigorous.

For consider, 1. That the stirring of Lust and Corruption is common to the most Sanctify'd and Holy whilst here; nothing has overtaken us therein but what's common to the Saints and assured Souls.

2. That these Lusts stirring in us, if we allow not of 'em, are not our Sin, or at least such a Sin as God will impute to us; but a Summons to rally our Forces to encounter 'em: which if we do in the Strength of Christ, the Captain of our Salvation, they'll not stand, but retreat and sculk into their Holds.

3. That we are assur'd of the Aid of God's Holy Spirit, whereby we shall not only force 'em to a Retreat, but sometimes effectually baffle and subdue 'em. So that if we resolutely encounter 'em, we need not fear 'em: for tho
we

we die together in the Battel, we shall leave 'em in the Grave; they shall rise no more to molest or trouble us. When this Corruptible shall have put on Incorruption; then shall we appear with all the Trophys of Victory and Honour, and eternally triumph over all our Enemyes.

I proceed now to caution you against three things which are very pernicious to, and great Hindrances of Christian Assurance. And the

First is Sin. That's a Soil which Assurance never grows in. If Men allow themselves in a deliberate Course of Sinning, whether more openly, as profane Persons do, or more slyly and closely, as the Hypocrite does; the Effects thereof are like to be Trouble and Fear, Anguish and Distress, and so they'll find one time or other. For Sin is the Womb of Sorrow, and the Nursery of Grief and Sadness. Sin loads the Conscience with Guilt, and Guilt arms the Conscience with Terroures, which fearfully sting and wound the Soul, spoil our Peace, and fill us with Horrour. Guilt haunts the Sinner wherever he goes; it lies down with him, and breaks his Sleep; it rises up with him, and torments his Mind; it clothes his Countenance with Paleness, and makes a Man restless in himself.

Moreover, Sin represents the ever-blessed God, in whose Favour is Life, as the most dreadful of all Beings; would banish him, if possible, out of our Thoughts; and makes the Sinner desire nothing more than that he would
Job 21.14 depart from him. Nor is it strange that they thus account of him, considering he is not a
Ps. 5.4, 5. God who has Pleasure in Wickedness; and has determin'd, that *Evil-doers shall not dwell with him.*

him. The Foolish shall not stand in his sight. He hates all the Workers of Iniquity.

Sin breaks all Leagues of Friendship between God and his Creatures, and causes him to become their Enemy. It exposes us to his Curse; *Dent. 28. 15.* and those who are cursed of him, shall be cut off. Their Peace, their Joys, their Comforts, *Pl. 37. 32.* their Hopes, and, without a deep Humiliation, their Souls, will be cut off. For what the Moth is in the Wardrobe, Sin is in the Soul; it feeds on, and insensibly wasts the Peace and Tranquillity of the Mind.

O the Power and Enmity of Sin! What can't it do? Has it not brought Angels out of Heaven? our first Parents out of Paradise? Has it not tumbled Princes down from their Thrones and Dignitys, and ruin'd the best of Governments? Has it not brought Kingdoms under Devastations, Churches under wasting Persecutions, Familys and Persons into Poverty and Misery? Does it not cause Men to be Enemys one to another? and that which is worse, it makes a Man an Enemy to himself: which surely is reason enough why we should be caution'd against it, as the great Obstructor of our Peace and Assurance.

I speak not of Sins of Frailty common to the Godly: for tho in that respect 'tis not with pious Men as they could wish, yet they have a Spring of Comfort open'd for their Relief in the Covenant of Grace, settled in the Mediator, Christ Jesus; and can say with *David, The my House be not so with God, yet he has made 2 Sam. 23. with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure.* But I speak of a Course of deliberate and voluntary Sinning against the Authority of God's Word, and the Light of our

Directions for getting

our own Conscience ; or lying, as *David* did, without Remorse under some capital Offence, into which we have been hurry'd by the Power of Corruption or Violence of Temptation ; whereby Reproach is brought to God's Name and Ways.

And tho God will on sincere Repentance graciously pardon such Sin, yet he may for the Vindication of his own Righteousness resolve to take Vengeance on our Inventions, by exercising us under bodily Afflictions, Perturbation of Mind, or otherwise. Did not *David's* Sin, tho pardon'd, entail the Sword upon his House all his days, and make him to complain of *broken Bones* whilst he liv'd ? Was not this the true Spring of the Church's Maladys, of which she complains, as if God had utterly rejected her ? Yea, she charges all upon Sin : *The Crown is fallen from our Head ; Wo unto us that we have sinned !* That's the Cause of God's withdrawing and hiding his Face, which introduces Trouble and Fear, viz. some unworthy Demeanour of ours towards him : Be caution'd therefore against it.

Secondly, Let's be caution'd against all Mistakes about the Terms of the Gospel, which divert from a stedfast Belief of the Necessity of Repentance, Faith, and Obedience to Salvation. For tho God himself and our Lord Jesus Christ urge these upon us, that we may be comfortable here and happy hereafter ; yet how is it to be bewail'd, that many (otherwise) worthy and good Men (as some term 'em) have entertain'd Opinions which lead into very gross and fatal Mistakes, in these very weighty and necessary things ! The Breath of these Mens Notions, while they vent 'em, tends only to infect the pleasant

pleasant Air of Gospel-Grace, whilst they tell us, that Ministers pressing Repentance on Sinners is a pious Fraud; and that some Men, whilst they live in Adulterys, Idolatrys, Blasphemys, Murders, and all manner of Ungodliness, have as much Right to Heaven as the most faithful, humble, and mortify'd Christian or Apostle.

Thus in short is the Grace of God, in the propos'd and settled Terms of the Gospel, made of no effect. And if it once comes to this pass with us, there is nothing left, that I know of, but a mighty Confidence (and that in a Matter which we are wholly ignorant of with respect to our selves) for sustaining us under those shaking Occurrences, which attending us produce Grief and Sadness of Spirit, as not knowing what our State is, and whether we must be happy or miserable for ever. We deprive our selves of all Comfort flowing from the Promises of God, whilst we thus slight and contemn his Precepts. Which, I say, let us be caution'd against, as a Rock upon which many precious Souls splitting, have been betray'd into Misery and Destruction.

Thirdly, Be caution'd not to meddle with edg'd Tools further than you may and ought; since they who do, and have not Skill to use 'em, are in danger to cut their Fingers: I mean, the Purposes and Decrees of God, which are too lightly and irreverently handled in this Age, and that by such as have but very little Knowledge. This is indeed Matter of Lamentation, that such mysterious Depths as the great Doctrines of Election and Justification should be manag'd with so much Confidence in favour to Opinion, without a Conscience of our own Weakness,

Weakness, or due Regard to the Word of God for concluding us therein; where only he has given us such a determin'd Sense of and Light into 'em as is necessary for us, and by the Revelation whereof we ought to govern our selves, and model our Opinions, rather than by the Judgment of others.

Have not the Learned in these late Ages by their Disputations fill'd the World with voluminous Tracts, and render'd these Doctrines (which the Scripture makes plain so far as is necessary for us) more dark and intricate than needs; and yet the Controversy is brought to no Issue? And how do the Illiterate, by taking up the logical Arguments, and drawing the Consequences of the Learned, frequently speak of things (and that in School-Phrases too) of which they have little or no Knowledg? and make these great Doctrines of the Gospel, *viz.* Election, Justification, and the Necessity of Perseverance in Holiness (design'd of God for our Comfort) the Rule and Standard by which they judg many sincerely holy, and dear to God, to be Heterodox and Erroneous. Whereas that their own Opinions about 'em (otherwise than as agreeable to the Holy Scriptures) are Orthodox and Right, they are no ways able to satisfy themselves, nor give the World any solid Proof, unless a Man's single Testimony for himself be sufficient.

And not only so, but they make these excellent and useful Doctrines (which cautiously and prudently consider'd, might serve to unite and comfort the Hearts of the truly Godly) the great Incendiary for driving all into Confusion, dividing the Church of God into Pieces and Fractions, fomenting Divisions to alienate all
Interest

Interest of Friendship, making those who should be a Delight, an Abhorrence to each other. This in all likelihood springs from no better than the common Principles of Pride and Ignorance, and serves no better Purposes than to gratify the Devil, to blemish and disgrace Religion, for the wounding of many weak, and turning aside inquiring Souls from the Ways of Truth.

I confess, to resolve against all Sin, so as not to allow our selves in it, as some manifestly do, under high Pretensions, to the Disgrace of Religion; to abhor those Positions which either deny the Humanity or Divinity of our Blessed Saviour, and the Satisfaction of his Sacrifice, and whatsoever is contrary to Godliness, is well, and what we ought vehemently to do: but to quarrel with and divide one from another, because we don't comprehend nor fathom those Truths which are too deep for us, is doubtless a Fault; and may I not here say with the Apostle, *My Brethren, these things ought not to be?* Jam. 3. 15.

'Tis certain that God places not our Salvation or Damnation on the Punctilio of Opinion, provided our Mistake amounts not to Heresy, wilfully maintain'd against the Evidence of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture. A Mistake arising in us thro Frailty, only in a Ceremony or Circumstance, he will have no great regard to, nor ever improve to our damage, if from a real Habit of Goodness we exercise our selves in a constant Course of Piety towards him; as 'tis intimated by the Apostle, saying, *The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* Rom. 14. 17.

What

What need is there then of all this Nicety of Distinction, and Sharpness of Censure among Men, as if Notion and Opinion were the only things worthy to be regarded by us? St. Paul tells us, that God has *chosen us in Christ* (speaking of Believers) *before the Foundation of the World, that we should be holy and without blame before him in Love.* To say then that Believers, and such as are holy and without blame before him, are the chosen of God, is a good Conclusion, and to argue safely. But should any say, that Infidels and profane Persons are the chosen of God in Christ, I can't conceive how 'tis agreeable to Truth, or capable of Demonstration from the Scriptures; since they tell us, that

Psal. 4. 3. 'tis the Godly Man whom he has set apart for himself.

The Apostle says, *That a Man is justify'd by Faith without the Deeds of the Law.* Then may we not conclude safely, that a Man is justify'd when he really believes? On the other hand, to say that a Man is justify'd before he believes, or without Faith in Christ, is to conclude against the Sense of Scripture, and the Righteousness of God, who is said to be just, and

Rom. 3. 26 *the Justifier of every one who believes in Jesus.*

'Tis indeed certain, that if all our Conclusions drawn from Scripture-Premises were natural and without force, we should happily arrive at Unity, and Christians would be brought from their undue Distances nearer together.

But since this is rather to be desir'd than expected, let me caution weak Christians to meddle less with these things; and I believe there are very few among us, strong or wise enough to concern our selves further with these Mysteries than as is before said. The Reason why I

caution

caution such, is taken from the great Damage which many have sustain'd, to the Bane and Ruin of their Hope and Comfort in this Life; who, it may be, have had so much Understanding as to affirm, that God, in his Eternal Counsel, has elected some to Salvation, and that nothing shall intervene to frustrate his purpose. This we all believe safely; but then that which for want of Wisdom they have inter'd as a natural Consequence, is, that God has reprobated all the rest, who notwithstanding the utmost Faith in Christ, and Holiness of Heart and Life which they can possibly reach to by their greatest Diligence, in a religious attending on God in his own ways, must inevitably perish: tho Christ has told us, that *Mat. 24.* every one who improves the Talent imparted *21, 23.* to him, according to the Ability which he has, shall be adjudg'd a good and faithful Servant, and as such be admitted into the Joy of his Lord.

Oh what an Engine has this been in the hand of Satan, who as a cunning Sophister improves such Advantages, to make dark and disconsolate the State of many dear to God; whence, when Fears and Doubts arise in their Minds, depriving 'em of the sensible Tasts and Apprehensions of the Sweetness of Divine Love, and especially when under the Rufflings of some violent Temptation, they uncomfortably conclude themselves to be Hypocrites, and now by all means must be Reprobates. They put all Comfort from 'em, and imagine nothing but that shortly they must lie down in everlasting Torments whereto they are destin'd, and there's no altering God's Purpose.

This indeed is a formidable Deception, which, tho' manag'd by a wily and malicious Enemy, rises principally (with the Fears and Torments attending) from their own misguided Judgment in these things, which are Depths too great to be fathom'd by 'em. Let our constant Care therefore, dear Friends, be to get our selves cloth'd with the Marks of God's Electing Love, by maintaining Humility, Charity, Self-Denial, a sincere and unblameable Purity; so shall we be best secur'd in the Divine Favour from that Damage which many have sustain'd as the Effect of an undue Fondness for their Opinion, to say no more.

I now conclude with some Directions to be observ'd by all. And because I have been somewhat prolix in the former Heads, I'll be the more brief in this. Would you be comfortable here, and have Assurance of Hope to the end? Then carefully observe the following Rules.

First, Maintain such Thoughts of God as are suitable to his Nature, the Excellency of his Perfections, and the Grace of his Works and Doings in the World. The want of this, or rather unworthy Notions of God, are the common Cause why so many careless People sin without Fear, fancying either that God sees 'em not; or if he does, that he is pleas'd with 'em as the Patron and Abettor of their Sins, while they do nothing but what in his Eternal Decree he has determin'd they should do: like
 Ezek. 9. 9. those to whom the Lord speaks, saying, *These Things hast thou done, and I kept Silence; thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thy self,*
 Pl. 50. 21. &c. Also why others more sensible and tender are so disorder'd and disquieted in themselves,
 by

by reflecting on their Imperfections; so magnify and aggravate their Weaknesses, screwing 'em up, by the Help and under the Influence of the Great Deluder of Souls, into the highest Rank of Enormitys; and then imagine 'em such as God will not or cannot pardon.

The former of these throw the Reins on the Neck of their Lusts, and without any Restraint do whatever is good in their own Eyes; while they think that God is nothing but Mercy, and that a *Lord have Mercy upon us*, is sufficient to atone for the Impiety of a whole Life of Sin. The latter consider him as righteous and just to Extremity, that he can't abate any thing, nor make the least Allowance in compassion to our Weakness, but will exact the uttermost Farthing: and thus rendring him rigid and severe, destitute of Mercy and a Readiness to forgive, they can have no Delight in him, but live uncomfortably in the Disquietness of their Hearts. Whereas right Conceptions and worthy Notions of God would be a never-failing Spring of Hope, dispose us to Cheerfulness under all Occurrences, and quickly work a pious Man into a comfortable Frame, and to rejoice in Assurance; for there is not any thing in God but what is mightily conducive thereto. He is good and ready to forgive, *Ps. 86. 5.* plenteous in Mercy to all that call upon him in Truth: And tho he be righteous in all his Ways, he is holy (or bounteous) in all his *Ps. 145. 17.* Works, insomuch as that needs not to interrupt our Peace.

The Thoughts of God's Justice should indeed effectually restrain us from all Unrighteousness of Heart and Life. The Thoughts of his infinite Holiness (which is his Glory and Excel-

lency) should engage and quicken us to a lively Imitation of him therein. But then his great Mercy and Kindness is enough to make glad our Hearts, and comfort us amidst our Weaknesses and Imperfections: for tho he has made it our Duty to be *Holy as he is Holy*, yet he expects not that we should reach him in the Degree and Perfection of his Purity; for that's advanc'd above all Conception, and in comparison thereof the *Heavens are not clean in his Sight*. What is Man then, that he should be clean? No, no; if there be Sincerity of Holiness, and a constant pressing towards Perfection, it answers the End of God in the Precept. He expects not that we should write after his Copy without Blots and Erratas, for then we should not need his pardoning Mercy, which he has magnify'd above all his Works, and which speaks him to be that incomparable Lord God who pardons Iniquity, and passes by the Transgression of the Remnant of his Heritage. Tho he may see many Blots in our Escutcheon, and read many Mistakes in the Lines of our Lives, yet that needs not to make us uncomfortable, if (as before) we are really pious.

Right Thoughts of God will make us joyful, in that he is a God who delights in Mercy, and therefore will subdue our Inquiries and have Compassion. 'Twas this which reviv'd and comforted David in one of his drooping and desponding Fits, and bore him up against all Discouragements, which wou'd have beaten down his Hope under the sense of his Sins and Weaknesses, viz. That tho God was angry, he would not retain his Anger; therefore he will not let go his Hope and Joy in him, but resolves on another Course, and that is, to hear what the

1 Pet. 1.
15.

Job 15.
14, 15.

Hof. 7. 18.

Mic. 7.
18, 19.

the Lord will speak. He will not speak Terror, nor utter his Voice with Thunder and in Flames of Fire as at Mount Sinai, which made both the Mount and the People to tremble at his Presence; but *he'll speak Peace to his People, and to his Saints, who turn not again to Folly.* Tho for a small moment he may hide his Face, yet from his innate Goodness he will have Mercy on, and comfort us with his everlasting Kindness. Thus Assurance of Hope may be gotten, and kept lively and strong under all Occurrences, by maintaining right Notions of the ever-blessed God.

Secondly, Maintain a strong and lively Faith in Christ, whereby you not only assent to his being the Messiah and Son of God, but by recumbency of Soul cast your selves on him in the way of your Duty, relying wholly on him for Acceptation with God, and Consolation of Heart. This is the great and sovereign Remedy which he prescribes, to arm and fortify his Disciples against those Pressures of Grief and Sorrow which might overwhelm 'em upon his Departure, and leaving them alone: But, says he, *Let not your Hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.* And in the Issue of things you shall find no reason to be asham'd or troubled, therefore believe. This will shield you against Fear, arm you against Troubles, and keep you comfortable: For Christ is that Root of Jesse, in whom if we trust, we shall be fill'd with all Joy and Peace in believing.

And how can it be otherwise, unless we thro Weakness suffer our selves to be deluded by that Sophister the Devil, and cheated of our Joy and Faith to boot? For Faith unites us to Christ, and makes us one with him. It inter-

Heb. 3. 14. rests us in all his Merits and Righteousness, in whom there is Fulness of both: So that thou, desponding Soul, mayst say with the Prophet,

Is. 45. 24. *In the Lord I have Righteousness and Strength.* Hold up your Heads, ye troubled ones, here's that which answers the utmost Demands of God's Justice. Abandon thy uncomfortable Notion, of God's being so strictly righteous as not to make any Abatement in regard of our natural Frailties, which are and will be unavoidable whilst we are in the Body; since there's perfect Righteousness in Christ, thy Lord and Head, which thro believing is wholly thine, and as thine own thou mayst plead it with God, who can't deny it, nor thee Impunity upon thy urging him with it, and insisting upon

Rom. 3. 26. it; for he is *the Justifier of every one that believeth in Jesus*, the Effects whereof are Peace, Joy, and Assurance for ever.

By this the Devil will be nonplus'd in all his Actions, his Accusations answer'd, and he fully baffled in all his Proceedings. By this an unbelieving or doubting Heart should be reason'd into a better Temper, because Justice must be satisfy'd with it, as not being able to shew the least Flaw in the Righteousness of Christ, which of God is transfer'd and made over to the believing Soul.

1 Cor. 1. 30.

Rom. 8. 33, 34.

Throw down the Gantlet then, bid all Doubtings be gone, and by a lively Faith in Christ triumph over 'em, making with St. Paul that defying Challenge, *Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect?* (that is, Believers in Christ) *'tis God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? 'Tis Christ who died, yea rather who is risen again, and is at the right Hand of God, making Intercession for us.* And hence arises a firm and

and settled Confidence, that *nothing* can or *shall* separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

If a believing Soul be well resolv'd against all Sin, so as not to sin wilfully or presumptuously, he needs not be press'd down below the Sense and Exercise of Joy and Assurance; for tho the Scriptures are written that we might not so sin, yet if *any Man sins*, i. e. thro Infirmity or Weakness (as there's no Man but does) then here's our Comfort, that *we have* : Joh. 2.1. *an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.* There's no reason but a Believer's Assurance should be as abiding as Christ's Intercession : For God can no more refuse the Pleas of his Advocation, than he did the Righteousness of his Life, or the Merit of his Death. The more firmly we believe in Christ, the more we shall glorify God; the further we shall be from staggering, and the more firm and stable will be our Assurance.

Thirdly, As we would preserve Assurance strong and vigorous, we must be careful to maintain Inoffensiveness, keeping a Conscience void of Offence towards God and Men. Let's not imagine that after we are in Christ by Faith, we may set our foot, and trample on him at what rate we please, or sin to what degree our Lusts can incline us. A Learned Doctor indeed once said (but I think him extremely mistaken in his Opinion) " That if " once a Believer sets footing on Christ, he " need not stagger for the Greatness of his Sins, " nor his Continuance in 'em." I should rather have expected from a Man of his Learning and Piety, that such as set their footing on Christ by Faith, should tread in *his Steps*,
walk

walk as he walk'd, and be afraid of nothing more than, by the intoxicating Fumes of Temptation and Corruption, of staggering into and lying down in the Lap of Sin. This latter the Doctor preach'd in his Conversation (as they witness who knew him) and why should any expect Comfort from his Opinion, which he himself suspected so as not to trust to it?

But had this Doctor been thorow-pac'd, I find the contrary to be both the Opinion (and Practice of another incomparably more worthy to be credited and imitated, and that's St. Paul, who in consideration of a *Resurrection from the Dead*, was influenc'd to nothing more than to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and Men. And indeed without this I know not by what Rule we can safely judg that we have our Foot on him, or any Interest in him; since Christ, who gave himself for us, died to redeem us from all Iniquity, and to purify us to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. And the necessity of these things he wills Titus (and in him all Gospel-Ministers) to press with all Earnestness on his and their Auditors.

Acts 24.
13, 14.

Tit. 2. 14.

Tit. 3. 8.

My Brethren, Conscience in Man is God's Vicegerent, and acts for him. 'Tis of a discerning Property; the flyest Wickedness can't escape its Cognizance. 'Tis cloth'd with Authority superior to that of the greatest Monarchs; and the most cutting Censures of Men are infinitely more tolerable than the Frowns and Lashes of our own Conscience. Its Work and Office is that of a Witness, and its Testimony is for or against us; and would we in every thing we do appeal to it, 'twould effectually

factually discover our selves to our selves, accusing or excusing, acquitting or condemning. And by the Judgment which it gives at present, we may judge of the Sentence which God will pass on us hereafter; for they are Counterparts in Nature, tho not for Power and Efficacy.

Hence St. John argues, *If our Hearts condemn us, God is greater than our Hearts. But if our Hearts condemn us not, then (what's the Fruit and Issue?) we have Confidence towards God.* John 3. 20. To Ver. 21.

live under the Lashes of an accusing and condemning Conscience, is not many Steps short of Hell. 'Tis a State of Fear and Perplexity, of Anguish and Dolour, of Wounds and horrible Expectation, wherein we have nothing to comfort us, for a wounded Spirit who can bear? Prov. 18. This is the most deplorable State of all others. 14.

Under the saddest Accident which can befall us, we can't sink so low but a good Conscience will sustain and comfort us; for the Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmity, as Wisdom tells us. A good Conscience is like Marrow to the Bones, it clothes the Countenance with Chearfulness. But you may say, Who are more jocund and merry than those who run a Round in Sin? I answer, 'Tis possible that Sin, and Custom in it, may lay the Conscience asleep, or cause it to lie still, and cease to perform its Office a while; but Sinners may know that when it awakes, as certainly 'twill at one time or other, 'twill bite and sting worse than Scorpions, and read 'em such a Lecture as will set 'em a trembling, clothe 'em with ghastly Paleness, break their Spirits with Sorrow, and fill their good things with Gall and Gravel. But a good Conscience will afford pious Men the Pleasure,

Prov. 15. 15. Pleasure, Joy and Satisfaction of a continual Feast, which is no less than Assurance of Hope.

Fourthly, Religiously attend your God in all his Ordinances, as you would get and keep Assurance. The Path of his Appointment is the Way of Life, in which holy Souls will be strengthen'd more and more by a delightful Contemplation of God, and be more firmly settled in the Persuasion of his Favour: For

Isa. 40. 31. *they who wait on the Lord shall renew their Strength; they shall mount up with Wings as Eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.* The great and gracious Tendency of the Ordinances of God is to strengthen us for Duty, and in performance of Duty to strengthen us in Assurance of Glory; for, says Christ, Rev. 22. 14. *Blessed are they who do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and enter in thro the Gates into the City.*

God has so settled things in the way of his Ordinances, as to afford his Children what's necessary for their Comfort. In his Church, which is his House, he gives his People the Meeting, manifests himself to, and bestows his Blessings upon 'em. Here he instructs and points to 'em the way in which they should walk: and of all other ways the Ways of God have these Advantages peculiar to 'em.

1. They are of God's own appointing, the King's High-Road, a plain and beaten Path, wherein the Saints before us have walk'd; and lead directly to that Heavenly Country, towards which his Pilgrims, viz. pious Souls, are travelling.

2. They are pleasant Ways. 'Tis only the carnal Heart that thinks 'em troublesom, but holy Souls can find no solid Delight in any other

ther way, and therefore, with Wisdom, pronounce 'em all to be *Ways of Pleasantness, and Paths of Peace.* Prov. 3. 17. Isa. 48. 18.

3. These Ways are safe and free from those Dangers which are common to others, being furnish'd and well-stor'd with infallible Guides; such as, God in his Word, Christ in his Example, the Spirit in its Inspiration and quickening Influences; and subordinate to these, painful and watchful Ministers: so that we can never be at a Loss by any Meander or Turning, but one or another readily points, and says, *This is the Way, walk in it.* And as here are faithful Guides, so also powerful Guards to protect from the Danger of Thieves and Robbers, who would plunder us of the rich and invaluable Jewels (our immortal Souls) which are a Charge we constantly carry about with us.

That holy Persons walking in God's Ways may be safe, they have a more honourable and powerful Guard than the most glorious Monarch in the World; for God will give his Angels charge to keep 'em in all his Ways. They are all ministering Spirits, who minister to and for the Heirs of Salvation. They are under Charge to encamp about them who fear the Lord; yea if these puissant Hosts are too weak and insufficient for Security, God himself will become our Guard and Keeper, rather than ought shall hurt us Night or Day: so that there is Safety in his Ways. Ps. 91. 11. Heb. 1. 14. Ps. 34. 7. Isa. 27. 3.

4. There is the best Accommodation, Entertainment and Company in his Ways; all very desirable things to a Man in a Journey. Would he have a good Inn to lie in at Night? Here are the Courts and most amiable Tabernacles of the Lord, for the pious Man to rest, and sweetly

sweetly to repose himself in. Here are good Baiting-Places also, where Souls weary and ready to faint may call and be refresh'd, and furnish'd with new Strength to hold on their way, viz. good Sermons, precious Promises, and believing Views of things not seen, which shall be enjoy'd in the end.

Here's likewise the best Entertainment. The Bottle is the Drunkard's Repast, Silver and Gold the Covetous Man's, sinful Pleasure and Recreations the Voluptuous Man's, Rest and Ease the Slothful Man's; but these things cause Sorrow and Wounds, and all perish in the using of 'em. Much better was *Israel's* Entertainment, when God rain'd Manna from Heaven upon 'em, and gave 'em Water out of the Rock; yet for all that they died, and many of 'em perish'd in the Wilderness. But here's Bread and Water of Life, which we may eat and drink, and never die. God has furnish'd his Ordinances with abundant Provisions, whence they are compar'd to a *Feast of fat things*, and *Rivers of Pleasure*, which yield Satisfaction and Contentment, even what's durable and lasting. The Streams follow us continually, even the Streams of that River which proceeds out of the Throne of God, and the Lamb. And for Company, there is none like that which pious Souls enjoy in the Ways of God. If the most sanctify'd Man on Earth, and the blessed Angels in Heaven are not good enough, they shall have better Company than this to walk and talk with 'em. God the Father will be with 'em, to shew 'em his Glory, to support 'em with his Hand, to comfort 'em by his Promise, to make 'em glad in his Presence. He'l banish Sorrow from their Hearts, and

and wipe away all Tears from their Eyes: Yea, Rev. 21, 1.
 now is he many a time with us, to direct, up-
 hold, protect and comfort, when we little
 think of it; as Jacob found, saying, God is in this Gen. 28.
 Place, and I knew it not. And for our Encou- 16.
 ragement the ever-blessed Jesus, our Emanuel,
 will be with us: Lo, I am with you always, Mat. 28.
 says he; with us at our lying down, that we 20.
 may rest in his Bosom; with us at our upri-
 sing, to lead and strengthen us. He will not
 leave us alone nor comfortless, but will sit down
 and sup with us, and by his Communion with Rev. 3, 20.
 believing Souls will satisfy 'em, that there nei-
 ther is nor shall be any want to them who fear Psal. 34, 9.
 the Lord.

Who then can be sad and penfive in the Pre-
 sence of such Company? Who can once doubt
 that hears Christ say in the blessed Sacrament,
 This is my Body broken for you; This is my Mark 14.
 Blood shed for you? Enough sure to raise us a- 22, 23, 24.
 bove all Despondings, to put a Period to all
 Disputes, and to settle us in Assurance of Hope.
 O therefore keep up Prayer to God: Maintain
 a strict Watch over your selves: Be frequent
 in reading and hearing God's holy Word, and
 religiously attend him in all his Ordinances, and
 especially that of the Lord's Supper.

Fifthly, Maintain Uprightness and Integrity
 Godward; and whatever we do in a way of Du-
 ty, let's do it sincerely with good and honest
 Hearts: for to such, and such only, Refreshment
 and Strength will be given; as Wisdom says,
 The Way of the Lord is Strength to the Upright: Prov. 10.
 He who walks uprightly, walks surely, like a strong 29.
 Man well skill'd in the way wherein he walks. Ver. 9.
 Wicked Men and Hypocrites walk feebly; they
 stagger and often stumble in the Ways of
 God's

Directions for getting

God's Appointments, meeting with one thing or other which crosses the Flesh, and thwarts their Interest: But a sincere Man, as he consults not Flesh and Blood, nor admits of carnal Reasonings; so he goes on resolutely, thro' thick and thin, up Hill and down Hill. If Lusts stir, he bids 'em be still: If Enemys meet him, he sharply encounters, foils and baffles 'em; *Pf. 84.11. for to such God is a Sun and a Shield, he gives Grace and Glory, and withholds no good thing from 'em.* Oh no, his Heart is with 'em, his *Mic. 2. 7. Eyes are upon 'em, his Word does 'em good, and his Ways shall yield Strength and Settled-* *Job 17. 9. nefs of Soul unto 'em: for as the Righteous shall hold on his Way, so he who has clean Hands shall wax stronger and stronger.*

With such God will be in all their Weakness, recover 'em from all their Faintings, revive 'em in all their Sadnesses, assure 'em of Protection *Prov. 2. 7. from Danger, as he is their Shield and Buckler, Psal. 23. 1. and a full and never-failing Supply to 'em: Yea, he will exalt the Upright, and cause 'em* *Isa. 33. 16. to dwell on high; high in Faith, high in Love, high in Assurance: Their Place of Defence shall be the Munition of Rocks, their Bread shall be given 'em, and their Waters shall be sure.* Here they shall have Heart-gladding and Soul-refreshing Views of their God; and from hence (as *Ver. 15, 16, 17. Moses from Pisgah*) they shall behold the King in his Glory, and see the Land which is the Lot of their Inheritance.

Ah! but says many a pious and tender Man and Woman, I fear I am not sincere, that's my Trouble; were I resolv'd in my Integrity, I should be satisfy'd. To this I answer:

'Tis strange that pious Souls can be at a loss about a thing of such moment, and which is so evident

evident to every Man's Conscience. However, if it be but a Fear, there's no reason such should torment themselves with it; for certainly no Man can be a Hypocrite, but he knows himself to be so. And for ought I know, a sincere Man may judg and know himself to be upright, as fully as a Son knows whether he really, and in his Heart, loves, honours and reverences his Father, or a Subject his Prince. But for a further Discovery of this Matter, ask thy Heart these following Questions:

1. Dost thou love God above all? 2. Does thy Will close with God's Will in all his Commands? 3. Canst thou chearfully deny thy self, rather than thy God or Duty should be neglected? 4. Art thou really in private what thou wouldst seem to be in publick? Art thou Religious without Noise? an Affecter of the Life of Godliness more than of the Form of it? 5. Art thou just in all thy Dealings, plain and open without Deceit and Collusion, doing to all as thou wouldst they should do to thee? 6. Art thou resign'd to his Providential Will, submissive to his disposing Pleasure, willing to be Rich or Poor, Prosperous or Adverse, so that God may be glorify'd, and Holiness further'd in thy Soul? If thou canst answer in the Affirmative to these Questions, doubtless thou art an upright Person; all thy Fears are groundless and unreasonable.

Sixthly, To all these add Diligence in the whole Will of God, abounding stedfastly therein. 'Tis the Advancement of this which our Apostle designs in our Text, by proposing this great Blessing, even Assurance of Happiness and Glory; and he presses to it by his most affectionate

Directions for getting, &c.

nate Desire, in confidence that it shall not be a vain and fruitless thing, but crown'd with Assurance here, and the Fruition of Glory hereafter.

But leaving this for the Subject of our following Discourse, we'll now commit the former to the Divine Blessing, begging in the Words of St. Peter, That the God of all Grace, who has call'd us to his Eternal Glory by Christ Jesus; after ye have suffer'd a while, would make you perfect, stablish, strengthen and settle you: To Him be Glory and Dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Pet. 5.
10, 11.

A
DISCOURSE
OF
Christian Diligence.

HEBREWS VI. 11.

*And we desire that every one of you do
shew the same Diligence, to the full
Assurance of Hope to the end.*

HAVING already laid open the great
and excellent Design of our Apostle
in these Words, at my first En-
trance on the Consideration of 'em
in the foregoing Discourses, to which I refer
you for the Understanding thereof; I'll not de-
tain you here by rehearsing any thing which
has been said, more than to recite the general
Conclusion, which without any Violence they
M afford

afford us, and is what the Apostle principally intends to enforce upon, and propagate among us; which is,

Doctrine.

That Assurance of Happiness and Glory is a Blessing propos'd to excite Christians to be diligent: So that it's out of all doubt, that Christian Diligence is more than a vain and fruitless Speculation, as it shall be bless'd with Assurance here, and the Fruition of Glory hereafter.

The Motive taken from the Assurance of Hope we have already dispatch'd, and spoken fully to. I now pass to the Duty, *viz.* Diligence under the Influence and Encouragement of so great a Reward, which is to be the Subject of our present Discourse.

But before I proceed, I shall premise this by ~~way of Caution~~ and Guard against the sharp and undue Censures of any who take Tradition for Truth, and are prejudic'd against the Matter and Form of the Position: For I know there are some, and not a few, who zealously oppose this kind of Doctrine (but when coin'd by themselves) insinuating that it borders upon *Rome*, favours of Merit in the Creature, and makes way for boasting; as if our Industry in Christianity could and would give us a certain and infallible Right to the invaluable Blessings of Assurance here, and Glory hereafter.

Now what the *Romish* Crew assert concerning Merit we heartily explode, and are no more accountable for it, than those who unadvisedly and out of mere respect to Opinion may become our Judges; but yet say, that Christian Diligence is not a vain and fruitless thing, but every way profitable and beneficial, tho not of

Tit. 3. 8. Debt, but of Grace. Every Man is under a perpetual

perpetual Obligation to do for God whatever he can; and when he has so done, must acknowledge that he *has done no more than his Duty*, Luke 17. *and is an unprofitable Servant.* Much more must 10. we, who do so little (as we have reason to conclude from our Inconstancy in Diligence) acknowledge to the Divine Glory, that we are unprofitable.

But while we consider the Kindness of God in Christ towards us, in taking us into the relation of Servants, appointing us Work to do, requiring us to do it with our greatest Diligence, as also proposing for the Encouragement of Industry so inestimable a Blessing as an eternal Reward, tho there be no proportion between the Work and the Reward, our Diligence and his Recompence; yet since 'tis the good Pleasure of his Will to give so high and disproportionable a Reward to the Work done by his sincerely diligent Servants, let whose Eye soever be Evil because he is Good, Mat. 20. we can't but with Joy declare to you, That 15. Christian Diligence is not a vain and fruitless thing, but shall be bless'd with Assurance of Glory here, and the Enjoyment of it hereafter.

The Method which I propound, and shall prosecute, to prevail with you and my self to advance in Christian Diligence, and so answer the end which our Apostle designs to promote in the Text, is this:

First, We'll shew you what this Christian Diligence is, and wherein it consists, that we may not be in the dark about it.

Secondly, We'll offer something for Proof and Confirmation, that we may stedfastly believe

that Christian Diligence is not a vain and fruitless thing.

Thirdly, We'll shew you wherein and about what 'tis to be employ'd, that we may know when we are in the practice of it.

Fourthly, We'll conclude with some Arguments, to engage every one of us more constantly to the Practice of this Christian Diligence.

We begin with shewing what this Christian Diligence is, and wherein it consists, that we may not be in the dark about it. In general, Christian Diligence is the speedy Application and engaging of our selves to our Work and Duty, according to the Will of God, with Understanding, Affection, fervently and resolutely, for the obtaining somewhat propos'd that's excellent in it self, and necessary to us. But more particularly, this Diligence consists in, or is comprehensive of, these six things.

1. It implies Knowledge and Understanding. For without Knowledge 'tis impossible for a Man to make any considerable Progress in whatever Science he pretends to. Two things a Christian Man must have Understanding in, and the Knowledge of, in order to his being diligent.

(1.) He must know his Work and Duty, or else with what Aukwardness and Unskilfulness does he go about it! like a Boy ignorant of the Mystery of his Master's Business, who knows not where to begin, nor how to proceed, and what he does many times is only fit to be undone; and so by his Diligence he does more hurt than good. Even so the more busy a Christian without the knowledg of his Duty is,

is, the more work he commonly makes for Repentance. For the more active a Man is who is void of Understanding, the more pernicious he is to himself and hurtful to others. From this cause *Israel* acted so preposterously as they did; and the Lord charges their great Rebel-
 lions to their want of Knowledg, saying, *They are a Nation void of Counsel, neither is there Understanding in 'em.* That will never pass for 28. Deut. 32.
 Christian Diligence with God, in the way of Duty, which is not guided by the Knowledg of his Will; any more than the *Athenians* Worship and superstitious Adorations were accepted, whilst directed to an *Unknown God*. Where-
 fore our Blessed Saviour says, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Act. 17.23 Joh. 13.17

(2.) A Christian must have Knowledg in the thing which he propounds to himself as the End of his Diligence; for as the thing appears excellent in it self, or necessary to us, we usually employ our Diligence in the obtaining it. A Man will never be solicitous for that which either has no Excellency in it, or of whose Excellency he has no Knowledg. The Woman of *Samaria*, not knowing the Gift of God, sought not for living Water; which, if she had, Christ would have given it to her. Tho a thing be made up all of Delights, as Heaven and Glory, and the Assurance thereof are, yet Ignorance of its Excellency is inconsistent with our Diligence in labouring for the Enjoyment of it. Job. 4.10.

2. Christian Diligence implies *Haste* and *Speed* in Work and Duty. To demur and loiter in our Business, is not to be diligent; but, says *David*, *I made haste, and delay'd not to keep thy Commandments.* He who dares to put off his Work, which he has now Power and

Opportunity to do, is a bold, but not a diligent Servant. *Jerusalem*, over whom Christ *Luk. 19. 42* wept, is miserable for ever, for not minding the things of her Peace in the day of her Peace. Shall we run the like risque, and yet account our selves diligent, whilst we neglect to enter upon the Work of our Duty? since the Holy *Job 22. 21* Ghost says, *Acquaint NOW thy self with him,* *Heb. 3. 7, 8* *and be at peace. To Day, if ye will hear his Voice,* *harden not your Hearts.* And again; *Behold,* *2 Cor. 7. 2.* *NOW is the accepted time, NOW is the day of Salvation.* Diligence is a swift putting in execution our utmost Endeavours to get the Work done, which yet lies on our hands undone.

3. Christian Diligence implies *Affection*. We are not apt to seek things which we have no love to. A Knowledge of the Excellency of Glory, and the Assurance of it, inflames the Soul with Love to it. And it's the Nature of Love to seek its Object, and that unweariedly; *Cant. 3. 1, 2* as the Spouse in quest of her Beloved: *By night on my Bed* (says she) *I sought him whom my Soul loves, but I found him not.* 'Tis no wonder that Christ is not found by us, when we seek him on our Beds between Sleep and Waking, with slumbring Affections, without Earnestness. So, many Professors in our day seek Christ and Salvation, who will never find one or the other without more Love and Painfulness. And that's the Course which the Spouse now resolves upon: *Ver. 4.* I will shake off my Sloth, awake my Affections, and go thro the Streets and broad Ways of the City. She made Enquiry, and anon you hear of her finding him whom her Soul loves. Where there is but a cold Affection to a thing, there will never be much Labour and Pains-taking in the Pursuit of it.

4. Christian

4. Christian Diligence implies ardent and fervent Desire. Whatever the Soul apprehends as excellent in it self, and loves as necessary, it goes out with Strength of Desire after it: like the Merchant who values the Treasures of the Indies, and desires 'em; and Desire puts him on the use of all Endeavours proper to compass 'em: or rather like David, who from his Love to God vehemently desires him; and this Desire engages him in the most eager Pursuit of him which he was capable of, as appears by his Allusion to the hunted Hart, which with all her Powers strains or presses towards, and pants after the Water-Brooks: So, says he, *pants my Soul after thee, O God.* Pl. 42. 1, 2.

5. Christian Diligence implies firm Purpose and Resolution. Whatever we esteem most excellent, love as such, desire as such, sets the Will to work, i. e. a resolving to face Dangers, encounter Difficultys, and to break thro all Oppositions in the way, whatever it costs. Faint Resolutions will produce but faint Endeavours; but a Soul resolv'd for Heaven and Glory, will use all Diligence to make 'em sure, saying of 'em as David said of his God, *My Soul follows hard after thee.* Psal. 63. 8.

Lastly, Christian Diligence implies Constancy of Endeavour in the Use of all good Means necessary to obtain those things we are in pursuit of, particularly the Blessedness of Heaven. And while a Christian has his eye upon it, he goes not back, he turns not aside, he stands not still: nor does he go forward like a Snail, or as he can with Ease and Convenience to the Flesh; but with holy Paul he *presses forwards.* Tho Paul had made such a progress towards Perfection, that but few, if any, could compare

Notes with him; yet he acknowledges that he had not attain'd to that pitch of it which was possible for him in the Use of Diligence; and while he is short of it, he tells us what his Practice is, *i. e.* *Forgetting those things which are behind, I reach forwards to those which are before, pressing towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Thus I have shewn you what Christian Diligence is, and wherein it consists. I now pass in the

Second place, to shew that 'tis not a vain and unprofitable thing, but shall be bless'd with Assurance of Glory here, and the Fruition of Glory hereafter. For this Service we might press a whole Cloud of Witnesses, who from Philosophy and mere Light of Nature recommend to Man the Practice of Diligence, as that which he's every way capable of, as the only means by which he can attain the Perfection of Nature, as that which is most commendable in him and beneficial to him; demonstrating also that the greater the Reward is which is propos'd, the more brutish and inexcusable is Man in the neglect of Diligence to obtain it.

Of these take a few Instances, which I find reported thus. *Cicero*, that fam'd and much-celebrated Philosopher, designing to teach Men the Love of Industry, as most agreeable to our Nature, says, "Men are born to Good Works, of which our Soul may serve for an invincible Proof; seeing 'tis never still, but in continual Motion. Among the obscure Precepts which *Pythagoras* gave his Disciples, this was one: "Take heed that thou sit not upon a Bushel; intimating thereby, that Idleness and Sloth was in an especial manner to be eschew'd.

chew'd. Also *Hesiod* says, " The Gods have
 " plac'd Sweat before Virtue, and Diligence is
 " the way that leads to her. And *Seneca* says,
 " There is nothing whereto continual Labour
 " will not attain; and thro Care and Vigilance
 " Men come to the end of most difficult Mat-
 " ters. And *Cicero*, in his Book of Laws,
 speaking of the Edicts of the *Romans*, relates
 this as one; " That no *Roman* should go thro
 " the Streets of the City, unless he carry'd a-
 " bout him the Badge of that Trade whereby
 " he liv'd. To these many more might be
 added; but that Authoritys of this kind are
 not likely to make any considerable Impressions
 on the Minds of Christians, and are too weak
 to enforce the Practice of Diligence in Virtue
 upon 'em.

I therefore proceed to some Proof out of
 God's Word, evincing beyond contradiction
 that Religious Diligence is not useless, but very
 serviceable to our present Comfort and future
 Happiness. Yea, 'tis certainly the main, if
 not the only Design which God would propa-
 gate by Religion and Christianity in the World,
 having determin'd our Diligence in Virtue to
 be the alone way by which we must attain to
 Assurance here and Happiness hereafter. Where-
 fore he indispensably requires it at our hands:
Thou hast, says the Royal Prophet, *commanded* Ps. 119. 4.
us to keep thy Precepts diligently. And that 'tis
 not a fruitless thing so to do, the Wise Man
 assures us, saying, *If thou criest after Knowledge*, Prov. 2. 3,
and liftest up thy Voice for Understanding; if 4. 5.
thou seekest her as Silver, and searchest for her as
for hid Treasure (all which Expressions imply
 Diligence) the Success follows: *Then shalt thou*
understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the
Knowledge

Knowledge of God: i. e. Thou shalt know him to be thy God and Portion, who will comfort thee here with the Assurance of his Goodness, and satisfy thee with his Glory for ever.

In confidence of this, St. Paul exhorts thus:

- 1 Cor. 15.
58. *Be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.* As if he had said, "O ye Corinthians, ye have full and undoubted Proof from your own Experience and the Promise of God, that Pains and Industry in the Service of your Lord Jesus Christ is not in vain and unprofitable. St. Peter likewise presses the Saints to Diligence; yea, to give all Diligence to add to Faith Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, and Charity: Assuring us, that if we grow and abound in these things, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ will come to such, and manifest himself to 'em in the Communications of his Love and Grace. Yea, he'll make his abode with 'em, according to his own Promise. And his abiding with diligent Christians will yield 'em such Fruit, as shall plentifully furnish their Hearts with Assurance or Confidence towards God.
- 2 Pet. 1.5,
7, 8. *give all Diligence to add to Faith Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, and Charity: Assuring us, that if we grow and abound in these things, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ will come to such, and manifest himself to 'em in the Communications of his Love and Grace. Yea, he'll make his abode with 'em, according to his own Promise. And his abiding with diligent Christians will yield 'em such Fruit, as shall plentifully furnish their Hearts with Assurance or Confidence towards God.*
- Joh. 14.
21, 23. *make his abode with 'em, according to his own Promise. And his abiding with diligent Christians will yield 'em such Fruit, as shall plentifully furnish their Hearts with Assurance or Confidence towards God.*

The highest Pretensions of Love and Loyalty to him, while we neglect diligently to do his Will, can no way avail us in the Judgment of our Blessed Saviour: Not every one who says Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the Will of my Father that is in Heaven. No People can be under so endearing Circumstances toward God, but Neglect of Diligence in his Service will dissolve all his Obligations of Kindness, force him to take away

away his Fence from about his Vineyard, lay his If. 5:1—
People common, and with others open to his 10.
Judgments, and at last to reject 'em as *Reprobate* Jer. 6. 30.
Silver, which he'll have no respect or value for.
Thus we have shewn you, that Diligence in
Virtue is so far from being a vain and fruitless
thing, that 'tis necessary; and now come to
shew to what purposes 'tis requisite, viz. to
our attaining the great Blessings of Assurance
here, and Happiness hereafter.

For proof of this, pray consider what less
can be the Intendment of the Holy Ghost, in
the following and such-like Expressions, which
are upon record almost in every Leaf of the
Sacred Volume. For instance, *Joshua* speaks
thus: *How long are ye slack to go and possess the* Jos. 18. 3.
Land, which the Lord God of your Fathers has
given you? Here observe, that the Lord had
given 'em the Land, yet they have not the pos-
session of it; and the reason is plain, because
they are slack, they use no Diligence to enter
in and possess the same. And as Sloth had hi-
therto hinder'd their Entrance, so without In-
dustry it might hinder 'em for ever, as well as
it did their Fathers, who perish'd in the Wil-
derness, tho God had also given them the Land
by Promise. But for their Sloth and Rebel-
lions, God made 'em *know his Breach of Promise*, Numb. 14.
or the altering of his Purpose, as the Margin 34.
reads it. So that tho the Purpose of God de-
clar'd by Promise to a People, be the best
Ground they can build Assurance upon; yet if
we cease to be a diligent obedient People, and
such as the Promise is made to, we may perish
as they did, and that without the least injury
either to his Faithfulness or Goodness.

Mat. 25.
14—30.

To the same purpose serves the Parable of the Talents; where our blessed Lord is intrusting his Servants with his Treasure. Two of 'em improv'd their Lord's Mony by Diligence in trading therewith: He, at his coming to reckon with 'em, own'd, commended, and rewarded their Industry, with a *Well-done, good and faithful Servant, enter into the Joy of your Lord.* But a third Servant comes, who had us'd no Diligence to improve the Talent committed to his Trust, only he secur'd it by digging in the Earth, and hiding his Lord's Treasure. And tho this also was Christ's own Servant, yet his Lord passes a quite different Judgment and Sentence on him for his Sloth and Unprofitableness, saying, *Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer Darknes.* Had he us'd the like Diligence, what had hinder'd his being as happy as the others? His Misery is wholly owing to himself. 'Twas the Fruit of his Negligence, the Effect of his Sloth. And whatever Men fancy, if unprofitable, they'll certainly find it so to their sorrow.

Mat. 11.
12.

Again, that Christian Diligence is the only way to Assurance and Glory, our Lord further intimates in likening Heaven to a Town or Castle besieg'd in a time of War: *The Kingdom of Heaven suffers Violence.* It holds out long, and suffers one Storm after another; yet for the Comfort of industrious Christians, it may be taken. But then to quicken our Diligence, he tells us, *The Violent take it by force.* It may cost us many Prayers and Tears, much Toil and Labour; yea, fighting and bleeding too. 'Tis no easy thing to storm a Castle; but what disheartening Difficultys soever lie in the way, 'tis certain the Christian who flags not in his
Refo-

Resolution and Diligence, will force his Passage in the face of Dangers, till he obtains Victory and a Surrender of the Kingdom. *The Violent take it by force.*

How significant is that Answer which our Lord makes to a very weighty Question; *Are there few that shall be sav'd?* His Reply tends to secure their being some of that number: *Strive to enter in at the strait Gate; for many, I say to you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* Here he plainly tells us who shall, and who shall not enter. The sleepy Prayers, idle Wishes, and faint Endeavours of formal and slothful Professors, will never enable 'em to enter; but the diligent and striving Christian shall, or else he answers not to the purpose; which none can suspect, or entertain such a Thought concerning him, without being vain in the highest degree.

And what can be more pertinent for this Service than St. Peter's Testimony, who recommends to the Saints, above and before all other things, the Use of Christian Diligence; as that by which they shall most certainly come to Assurance here and Glory hereafter? *Give,* says he, *all Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure; for so an Entrance shall be minister'd abundantly to you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

God promis'd his People Israel no less than this, upon their applying themselves with Diligence to Duty, after he had expostulated with 'em, to convince 'em of their Folly in exercising their Industry on other things more than on God and his Service: *Why spend ye your Money for that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which satisfieth not?* Then he adds, to instruct

struct 'em into the Knowledge of what would be most beneficial to 'em; *Hearken diligently to me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight it self in Fatness. Incline your Ear: come unto me; hear, and your Soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure Mercys of David.* But if Israel, to whom God makes this Promise, loiter in the Work of his Vineyard, they will not only lose the Good of the Promise, but lie open to his just Displeasure.

Isa. 48.
18, 19.

This they found by Experience to their sorrow, as the Lord expresses it with a Sigh; *O thou hadst hearken'd to my Commandments! then had thy Peace been as a River, and thy Righteousness as the Waves of the Sea. Thy Seed also had been as the Sand, his Name should not have been cut off, nor destroy'd from before me.* You see what's like to be the issue of a negligent Course in Religion and Godliness. Wherefore our Apostle cautions Christians to take heed of striking on these Rocks which have split others, Heb. 4. 1. *saying, Let us fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of us seem to come short of it; and desires every one of us, in our Text, to shew the same Diligence (as ever) to the full Assurance of Hope to the End: And that we be not slothful, but Followers of them who thro Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.*

Now from this abundant Evidence we safely conclude, that Christian Diligence is not a vain and fruitless thing; but shall be bless'd with Assurance here, and Glory hereafter. And can any possibly so much as suppose the contrary, who will but give themselves leave calmly to consider these three things? viz.

1. Whether

1. Whether there is either Wisdom or Safety in concluding against the stated and determin'd Sense and Mind of God in his Word, which so abundantly speaks forth the Truth of what we have concluded.

2. That tho God be so plenteous in Grace, as thro the Merits of our Lord Jesus Christ to give a Reward abundantly above the Work of his most laborious Servants; whether 'tis not requisite for his Honour, according to his own Righteousness, and the Equity of his Proceedings, to make it the Wages only of such as are diligent, and so distinguish between the precious and the vile? since making a difference in the great Day of Retribution, he'll separate the Sheep from the Goats, and those who serve him from those who have serv'd him not; and especially since he is declar'd to be a Rewarder of them who diligently seek him. *Mat. 25. 32, 37. Mal. 3. 12. Heb. 11. 6.*

3. Whether, upon Reflection on our selves and ways, our Hearts have not many a time smitten us, and our Consciences testify'd against us; so that we have stood self-condemn'd, full of Horrour and Fear, not only for Neglect of Duty, but for slight and superficial Performance thereof. So it has been with my self; and if it has been so with others, the Proof is sufficient. I pass to the

Third thing propos'd, which is, to shew what those things are, about which Christian Diligence is to be employ'd, that we may know when we are in the practice of it; and they are only such as are lawful, laudable, and necessary to the Glory of God, the Benefit of others, and our own Weal: all which we'll reduce to two general Heads, viz.

1. The

1. The things which relate to us as Men in a Family-Relation.

2. Those which belong to us as Christians, under a more general Consideration.

The former comprehend those reciprocal Dutys which Men owe to each other in a Family-Relation ; which, as God by his wise Providence has order'd things, consists of distinct and different Conditions, as Superiour and Inferiour, Bond and Free. Now this difference in State exempts none from the Obligation of Duty, but calls upon every one to express the Respect which they owe in that Relation, and not to be unjust nor injurious to one another.

And (to begin with them) let *Husbands* see diligently to their Dutys towards their *Wives*, which are divers. The first is *Love*. Love is the very Soul and Spirit, Life and Comfort of this Relation ; and that their Love may be such for kind and degree as it ought to be, 'tis exemplify'd by our Blessed Saviour's own Pattern herein, being recommended to our Imitation, Eph. 5.25. with injunction, that we *so love our Wives as he lov'd his Church, and gave himself for it*: which Love of Christ has the following Property.

1. High-prizing and Estimation, a thing which Husbands are too prone to be defective in, by slighting and undervaluing their Wives, as if they were the least desirable and most contemptible of all others. 2. 'Tis very tender, void of all Violence and Outrage, which many brutish Men too often express in their rude and boisterous Fury : but, says *Paul, Husbands,* Col. 3.19. *love your Wives, and be not bitter against 'em.* 3. 'Tis kind and beneficial, engaging the Husband to minister all he can for the Safety and Protection of the Wife from Harm and Danger, inter-

interposing himself for her Security; and not only so, but to minister all he can for her Pleasure and Satisfaction. This Christ did for his Church, and this Husbands must do for their Wives, as they are part of themselves, and to be lov'd as such. Therefore, says the Apostle,

Let a Man so love his Wife as himself.

Eph. 5.33.

A second Duty of the Husband to the Wife, is that of *Honour*: *Give Honour to the Wife as to the weaker Vessel.* Maintain a venerable Esteem of her, express Respect and Generosity towards her in your whole Behaviour. Conceal her Weaknesses, and divulge nothing of hers but what may crown her with Reputation and Honour.

1 Pet. 3. 7.

Thirdly, Another Duty of the Husband to the Wife, is that of *Maintenance*; affording her all things for her comfortable Subsistence, as his State and Ability will well bear, freeing her from all Incumbrances which burden her, and making her Partaker with himself in his Privileges and Plenty. Answerable to these are the Dutys of the Wife towards her Husband; which are,

1. That of *Reverence*, which implies two things: (1.) Love and Respect to his Person, so as to delight in him, and to minister all she can for his Joy and Comfort. (2.) Fear, whereby she carefully and prudently shuns and avoids every thing that's displeasing and offensive to him; in both which respects 'tis a Charge on the Wife to see that she reverence her Husband.

Eph. 5.33.

2. *Subjection* and Obedience, not to dispute and brawl, to insult and domineer, as too many foolish Women do; but to submit themselves in all things lawful and expedient, as the Will of God and their Duty is, the Man

being the Head of the Wife, the Woman being made for the Man ; and from the Example of
 1 Pet. 3. 7. holy Women of old, who were in subjection to their own Husbands. Therefore, says St.
 Eph. 5. 22. *Paul, Wives, submit your selves to your own Huf-*
 Col. 3. 18. *bands, as to the Lord.*

3. *Helpfulness* is another Duty of the Wife, contributing what she can to his advantage, as becomes a meet Help, by Industry in such Business as is futable to her State and Ability ; but especially in managing the Affairs of the House
 Tit. 2. 5. with Discretion and Providence, spending her time much at home, not squandering it abroad in the Neighbours Houses, or making unnecessary Visits, whereby Women often learn to be
 1 Tim. 5. *idle, become Tatlers, Busy-Bodys, and Back-*
 13. *biterers ; which by all means must be avoided by*
 Tit. 2. 5. *em, as things dishonourable to God and Religion, as also pernicious to their Husbands, and Hasteners of Poverty upon a Family.*

In fine, 'tis the Duty of a Wife quietly to acquiesce in every Change which may pass upon her Husband's Fortune ; to be content as well to suffer with him as to rejoice with him, in Sickness and Health, in Want and Fulness. These things are necessary on both hands, and call for Diligence in each Party, that they may appear *Heirs* of the Grace of God, and that
 1 Pet. 3. 7. *their Prayers be not hinder'd by domestick Broils*
 and unnatural Contentions between themselves, which are always destructive to the Comfort of that Relation, and happily prevented by Christian Diligence.

A second sort of Dutys which Men owe to one another in a Family-Relation, are those which belong to us as Parents and Children.

I begin with the Duty of Parents to their Children, whose Obligation of Respect to 'em nothing can dissolve, especially during their Minority, as they are the Instruments of their Being, and are part of themselves. Therefore both God and Nature have made it the Duty of Parents to contribute all they can both to their temporal and spiritual Advantage, by an early dedicating 'em to God, solemnly praying for his Blessing on 'em, and his Favour towards 'em; guarding 'em against and protecting 'em from all those Evils to which by reason of their natural Weakness they are incident, and into which from their want of Experience and the Levity of their Nature they are apt to run; to prevent their getting those Habits which strongly incline 'em to Folly, and are rarely broken off without *the Rod of Correction*.

Prov. 22.

As soon as they are capable of Instruction, they ought to teach 'em the Fear of God, and the Principles of Religion; and in doing thereof, to condescend to their Capacities, using Sweetness of Temper and Expression, avoiding Rigour or Severity, lest they should be provoked or discourag'd; setting 'em always such an Example as may render their Imitation pleasing to you, and profitable to them. To command 'em to do nothing but what is just and right. Carefully to provide a suitable and honest Employment, and lay up for 'em a Treasure of Prayers with God, and such a Portion of our earthly Treasures as our Abilities will allow of. These and such-like are the Duties of Parents to their Children.

15.

Col. 3. 21.

2 Cor. 12.

14.

Nor are those of Children towards their Parents less solemn and incumbent, from the Law of God and Gratitude, than the former. The

great Duty which they owe to Parents is that of *Reverence*, and the Obligation thereto is perpetual. Nothing short of Death can discharge 'em from a Parent's just Claim to their Respect and Honour. And this Children must express, by ordering all their Words and Speeches, Carriage and Behaviour, with Humility, Reverence, Respect, and Observance. A slighting of Parents has brought down severe Judgments on undutiful Children, according to those Threatnings denounc'd, *Prov. 30. 17. Ch. 20. 20. Lev. 20. 9.*

Again, they owe to their Parents the Duty *Col. 3. 20. of Obedience*, submitting themselves to all their *Eph. 6. 1.* Commands which are not contrary to the Will of God. But when a Superiour, of what kind soever, shall presume to require that of an Inferiour which God has forbidden, or to prohibit that which he has requir'd; in such a case, *Acts 5. 29. God is to be obey'd rather than Men.*

Again, *Gratitude* is a Duty owing to Parents; which is not only a thankful Acknowledgment of all their tender Love and Care express'd in their Protection and Provision for Body and Soul, but a requiting their Kindness and Bounty to us, in ministring to their Necessitys, when by the Providence of God they are thro the Weakness and Infirmitys of Old Age, or any other Calamitys attending 'em, reduc'd and brought into Want. Especially they must diligently see that Poverty in Parents make 'em not the Object of their Neglect and Contempt. I pass to a

Third sort of Dutys, which Men owe to each other in a Family-Relation, *viz.* those due to *Master* and *Servant*. For besides the Law of God, which provides for both in this case,

Duty

Christian Diligence.

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Duty becomes due to each other by Contract and Covenant. Let Servants then know that they owe to their Masters *Respect* and *Honour*, which is to think, speak, and act towards 'em with Love and Reverence; and this purely as they are our Masters, without any Respect had to their Qualifications, Worth, or Merit: i. e. whether they are religious or irreligious. 1 Tim. 6. 1 1 Pet. 2. 18 Col. 3. 22.

Again, diligent *Obedience* is due to Masters; whereby we don't only adhere to and receive their Commands for directing us to our Work and Duty, but we dispose our selves to the performance thereof, and to please 'em in all things according to the Will of God; avoiding Eye-Service, which is to be no less diligent in their Absence than in their Presence, doing Service more to please Christ than Men: And therefore St. Paul tells us how we must serve; and that is, *in Singleness of Heart, with Diligence or Good-will, as unto the Lord, and not to Men.* Eph. 6. 5, 7

Moreover, *Justice* and *Faithfulness* is due to a Master; which Servants must express by speaking the Truth at all times with their Tongues, or else a Master may be betray'd into a Mistake to his damage. And if a Lye in the Servant occasion it, the Damage sustain'd is wholly owing to, and in Justice chargeable on him. Also in all his Actions, that the Business appointed him be done in its appointed time, or at least that his time be apply'd to that purpose, and not spent in Play or Idleness; for that can't be done without damage to his Master, whose all his Time is. Also in applying his Master's Goods and Money to his Use and Interest only, according to his best Skill and Understanding, *without purloining or wasting the one or the other.* Tit. 2. 10.

Again, they must be *patient* under Rebukes, and take Reproofs quietly, knowing that they are Servants, and bound to Subjection; therefore must not reply again. 'Tis rude in a Servant so to do, and tends only to provoke a Master's Displeasure, and to promote Noise and Contention, and often procures Stripes and Blows: But St. Peter tells us, for the silencing all Pleas for our Excuse therein, that *if we do well, and suffer patiently, it is well-pleasing to God.*

1 Pet. 2.
20.

But then Masters also owe Dutys to their Servants: for tho they have the Advantage in State and Condition, and a Right to command and be obey'd, yet Masters must take heed that all their Commands are lawful and *reasonable*; neither sinful in themselves, nor such as be impossible, cruel or extreme, making Servants to serve with Rigour, by imposing Tasks upon 'em either above their Strength or Understanding, but such as may be done with moderate Care and Industry.

Again, they must not only be merciful in their Exactions, but mild and gentle, avoiding
 Eph. 6. 9. Brawling and Threatnings; and provide things honest and convenient for 'em, such as the A-
 Col. 4. 1. postle terms *just and equal*. You must patiently hearken to the just Complaints, and not de-
 Job 31. 13, spise the Cause of your *Man-Servant* or *Maid-*
 14, 15. *Servant*; but in Righteousness redress their Grievances, knowing that you have a Master in Heaven, who when he visits, how will you answer him who avenges the Cry of the Oppress'd?

In fine, you must be very careful of the Souls of your Servants, which as they are incomparably more Worth than their Bodies are to be prefer'd above and before 'em, and in a special manner to be taken care for by us
 therefor

therefore spend convenient time in reading the Holy Scriptures, and unfolding to 'em the Mind of God contain'd therein, in catechising and praying for 'em and with 'em, setting 'em a pious Example in your own Conversation, that the Ignorant may be instructed, the Erroneous reduc'd, and those who oppose themselves may be overcome and entirely won by the Charms of Religion and Godliness, maintain'd and kept up in the Family.

And here let me intreat and beseech you who are Masters, to express Charity in the Use of Diligence and Industry for furthering your Servants Salvation, as ever you would render your Accounts to God with Joy about their Souls committed to your Charge. Were all these things, briefly hinted to you, but duly observ'd and practis'd by one and another, how would God be glorify'd, Religion adorn'd, and every one edify'd and comforted! Thus I have done with the relative Dutys, which I told you was the first thing about which Christian Diligence was to be employ'd. I pass now in the

Second Place to the Dutys belonging to us as Christians, under a more *general* Consideration, which I shall reduce to these four, *viz.* such as relate,

1. To our *glorifying God.*
2. To the *Peace and Weal of the Church* to which we belong.
3. To the *Quiet of the State* and Government under which we live.
4. To the *Good of all Men* with whom we have to do. In doing these things well, I am persuaded a Christian will find his whole Diligence little enough to be employ'd.

The *First* is, *Glorifying* of God. This was
 Rev. 4. 11. the great End of his giving us a Being in the
 1 Pet. 2. 9. World, and more especially the Intendment
 of all his Grace bestow'd on us, as Christians;
 which shews the Obligation we are under to
 1 Cor. 10. perform it: whence St. Paul directs, that whe-
 31. ther we eat or drink, or whatever we do, all must
 be done to the Glory of God.

However know this, that glorifying God is
 not to do or give any thing to him, whereby
 we add to his essential Glory and Felicity.
 What he requires, he expects from us, not be-
 cause he wants it, or is better for it; who is so
 infinitely bless'd and perfect in himself, that
 he can't want any thing without himself, much
 less mortal Breath to praise him, or Hands of
 Pl. 148. 13. Flesh to serve him, whose Name alone is Excel-
 lent, and his Glory exalted above the Heavens.
 But it imports a stedfast believing him with
 our Hearts, and declaring him with our Tongues
 and Lives to be what he is; as the Psalmist ela-
 gantly expresses it, *Sing forth the Honour of his
 Name, make his Praise Glorious.* Now doing of
 this calls for these three things.

1. That we maintain *right* and *worthy Con-
 ceptions* of him, such as are suitable to the infi-
 nite Excellencys and Perfections of his Na-
 ture; whereby we reverence and admire him
 Psal. 10. 4. as incomparable in his Incomprehensibleness,
 Ezek. 8. 4. Infiniteness, Almightyness, Holiness, Omnisci-
 ence, Goodness, Faithfulness, and the like.
 Some think not of God at all; others think of
 him, but not aright. Therefore to suppress all
 false, unworthy, and blasphemous Thoughts of
 God, and to conceive of him as he is, is doubt-
 1 Cor. 6. 20 less to glorify him with our Spirits, as St. Paul
 words it.

2. That

2. That we imploy our *Tongues* in all our Discourses with others, to speak of him accordingly; that giving 'em right Ideas of him, his transcendent Amiability may incline 'em to enquire after him, and fire their Hearts with Love to him, as the Sponse did the Daughters of *Jerusalem* in describing her Beloved. Also to speak of his Works as wonderful, which indeed they are; for Creation and Providence are so stupendous, as to offer us Matter both for delightful Contemplation and Discourse.

Cant. 5.8.
6.1.

Especially his Works of Grace in our Redemption by Jesus Christ, if duly consider'd, will force us with Holy *David*, not only to speak of the glorious Honour of his Majesty, but of all his wonderful Works; and to bless and praise him for the Riches of his Kindness by Christ Jesus, in taking hold of us when we were sinking deservedly under the weight of our crying Sins into the Abyss of Misery; in reconciling us to himself, and restoring us to his Favour; in adopting us into his House, and providing for us as Children; in protecting us from Enemys, in guarding us against Temptation, in answering our Prayers, accepting our Persons and Services, giving us his Spirit, and entitling us to his Glory. Who can think aright of these things, and not praise him? and they who praise him aright, glorify him.

Pf. 50. 23.

3. That we express a Conformity to him in the whole Course of our Conversations, governing our selves by the Rule of his Holy Word, which is the most certain and clear Expression of his Will and our Duty. In doing this three things are necessary: (1.) That we abandon all *Sin*, or else instead of glorifying him we shall dishonour him, and cause his Name

Name and Ways to be blasphem'd and evil-spoken of. (2.) That we vigorously oppose and resist all *Powers*, opposing the Interest and Glory of God in the World. And this we must carefully see to, in mortifying the *Flesh*, subduing in us all Propensions to Sin; bringing down every Lust, which exalts it self, to the Obedience of Jesus Christ; always remembering that the *Flesh* carries on a different and separate Interest to that of Christ's, for *the Flesh lusts against the Spirit*.

Gal. 5. 17. Another Enemy to God's Interest and Honour is the *World*, in the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of it. How many Christians are daily by its bewitching Charms laid asleep in its Lap! Some puff'd up with Pride from their Riches! Others swelling with Ambition from their Honour! Others ready to sink and drown in the Quick sands of carnal Pleasures! On the other hand, how many are carry'd away by the *Impetus* of their filthy Lusts, basely and cowardly to quit the Interest of God; and others from the *World's* Frowns, threatening Contempt, Poverty, a Gall and Gibbet. But as
1 John 2. 15. Christians are redeem'd from the *World*, let such oppose its Powers, by withdrawing their Affections from it. So shall we overcome it, be dead to it, and such as its Weapons can never hurt; for the *World* rarely wounds any, but such as inordinately love it.

Another Enemy to God's Interest and Honour is the *Devil*, who never could endure the
2 Cor. 4. 4. Thoughts of a Superior to himself; who is call'd
Eph. 2. 2. the God of this *World*, the Prince or *Spirit* who works in the Children of *Disobedience*, who has erected a Kingdom of Sin and Darkness: and unless Care be us'd, he'll blind our Eyes, and by his

his Power and Policy make us his Captives: Wherefore St. Peter earnestly exhorts the Christians to *resist him stedfast in the Faith.* And 1 Pet. 5. 9, 10. St. James assures us, that if we *resist him, he will flee.* Jam. 4. 7. These are Powers opposing the Honour of God, which we must resist and subdue. And then,

3. As we would glorify God in the Course of our Lives, we must conform to him in Obedience to his Commandments, doing always those things which he has requir'd in his Word, viz. such as these: The Consideration of our Ways, repenting and humbling our selves for Sin, Prayer to God in Christ's Name, acting Faith in Christ's Righteousness for Justification, in his Blood for Sanctification, and in his Intercession for Acceptation; rejoicing in the Lord, reading the Scriptures, holy Meditation, sincere doing whatever our Hand finds to do.

All this we must do, that unblameable Holiness, shining forth in all and every part of our Lives, they may answer to the Word, as in a Glass Face answers to Face; and appear as evidently to be a Draught of God's Word, as his Word is a Draught of himself: and so shall we glorify him. But who can think of doing this without Diligence, which can't be done without denying our selves those things which are most pleasing to the Flesh, and practising things which naturally are most irksom to us?

The next thing about which Christian Diligence is to be exercis'd, is a constant Endeavor to advance the Peace and Weal of the Church of God, to which we belong as Members. To this you stand firmly bound, by the Covenant which you solemnly made in your Baptism, which
you

A Discourse of

you can never violate, but 'twill be Treachery both to God, the Church, and your own Souls. She has Enemy's enough without her, she needs not any to arise from her self. Every Member in the Body Natural ministers in its place for the Benefit of the whole, as also the Members of the Body Politick; and no less should the Members of the Body mystical, which is the Church of Christ.

- Therefore, Christians, see to it in your several Stations, that its Peace be not disturb'd, but kept inviolable. Would Ministers diligently wait on their Ministry, without interfering or meddling with the Work and Business of the State, leaving the Management of that to them to whom it more properly belongs; 'tis odds, but both the one and the other would be better done. Our Propertys might be better secur'd, Christians better edify'd, and the Church's Peace and Weal better advanc'd, would every one *study to be quiet, and mind their own Business*. God has press'd it as a Charge upon us, to *follow after the things which make for Peace, and things wherewith one may edify another*, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.
- Rom. 12. 7, 8.
- 1 Thess. 4. 11.
- Rom. 14. 14.
- Eph. 4. 3.
- Gal. 5. 14.
- Mat. 12. 25.
- To disturb the Church's Peace by Jars and Contentions, sullys her Beauty, spoils her Comfort, breaks her Bonds, and endangers her Ruin: For our Saviour tells us, *A House divided against it self can't stand*. Disorder and Confusion is consequent to Division and Discord; and by this how are the Sincere griev'd? the Weak made to stumble? the Wicked harden'd? the Devil gratify'd? many kept out of the Church who otherwise might have come in? and others cast out who otherwise might have been

been kept in? For when the Churches were quiet, and walk'd in the Fear of the Lord, they Acts 9. 31. were both comforted and increas'd. Therefore prize her Peace, and promote it. Keep humble under your highest Attainments and Enjoyments. Nothing is more hurtful to her Peace, than Pride in her Members.

Deny your selves rather than grieve the Church. I say, study to be quiet, every one minding their own Business; that Idleness, Tatling and Back-biting may be avoided, and the ill Effects thereof, which are Feuds and Contention, prevented. Fill up your Places at all times in her Assembly, not leaving 'em as the manner of some is. Walk orderly, and behave your selves in and towards her without Offence; and not only so, but love her, delight in her Courts, pray for her Peace and Prosperity. Contribute both of your Temporals and Spirituall for her Weal and Support. Speak respectfully of her, and act in nothing unbecoming Members of that Body of which Christ is the Head: So shall her Peace be secur'd, and her Weal be advanc'd.

A Third Thing incumbent on Christians, is to labour for the Quiet and Tranquillity of the State and Government under which they live. This is no less necessary in its place than the former; and certainly such as neglect it have not learn'd of Christ, and are Strangers to his Holy Religion: for if God made it the Duty of his People Israel, when Captives in Babylon, to pray for the Peace of the Land where they abode, who can insinuate that Christians are exempted from Dutys of this kind without being culpable? especially since the Christian Law so often enforces it, and among other things enjoins these following:

1. To

1. To honour and reverence our Govern-
 1 Pet. 2. nors: *Fear God*, says the Apostle, *and honour*
 17. *the King*; which forbids us to entertain in our
 Hearts any unworthy and disrespectful Thoughts
 Eccl. 10. of their Persons or Governments, and re-
 20. quires us to speak with that Respect, and act
 with that awful Regard, which their Dignity
 and the Word of God call for; remembering
 that it's made the Character of an Antichrif-
 2 Pet. 2. 10. tian Frame, to *despise Governments, and to speak*
evil of Dignitys.

2. To Subjection and Obedience, which re-
 quires either an active doing what is injoin'd,
 or a quiet suffering what they inflict, in case
 their Commands are such as can't be obey'd
 with a good Conscience towards God. In this
 particular without doubt, that once celebrated
 Doctrine of Non-resistance, so basely thrown
 out of doors by the furious Patrons of it to
 serve a turn, when themselves were touch'd in
 a sensible part, must take place. For I know
 nothing on this side the Grave can discharge us
 from this Service but one, which, blessed be
 God, our Sovereign abhors the Thoughts of,
 as much as her People do. All their Com-
 mands which are not sinful must be obey'd.
 We must rather dispense with our own Hu-
 mour, than the Command of our Sovereign:
 1 Pet. 2. 13. For the Gospel-Canon is, *Submit your selves to*
 Rom. 13. 1. *every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake.*

3. To a ready and chearful Contribution
 of our Wealth and Treasure to support the
 Government, paying all Taxes legally impos'd
 on us: For doubtless Princes have a Right to
 their Subjects Treasures for that purpose, since
 our blessed Saviour (tho he was free) would
 work a Miracle rather than give Offence, by
 refusing to pay Tribute to the Kings of the
 Earth.

Earth. As we must give God his Glory, and the Church her Due; so also must we give to *Mat. 22: 21.* *Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.*

4. To perform Civil Offices, whereunto we are duly call'd, according to our best Understanding and Ability, with Diligence and Faithfulness. And, 5. By putting up frequent and fervent Prayers to God for our Governors, according to the Exhortation of the Apostle: *1 Tim. 2. 1.* And that our Queen may be protected by God in her Royal Person, from Conspiracys and Treasons at Home and Abroad; that She may more and more be replenish'd with all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding; that in the Exercise of her Dominion, Righteousness and Peace may kiss each other, let all her Subjects pray; and earnestly endeavour under her to lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty, that both she and her Government may be quiet and prosperous.

A Fourth Thing appertaining to us Christians, is, that we do what *Good* we can to all Men with whom we have to do, without respect to their Condition, as being Godly or Ungodly, Friends or Enemys; not doing to them as they do, but as we would have them do to us; and as we have Ability and Opportunity doing 'em good, tho they do us evil; expressing Love, Charity and Benignity towards 'em. And where our Mercy and good Will can't reach 'em for their Benefit, let us pray to God to hand a Portion to 'em for Relief both of Soul and Body: So shall we be like the ever-blessed Jesus, who went about doing Good, and has declar'd Generosity and Kindness to be the Property of God, and made it the Duty of every Christian, saying, *Love your Enemys, bless them* *Mat. 5. 44.* *who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and*
pray

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pray for them who despirefully use and persecute you.

To the like purpose St. Paul speaks: *Be not, says he, overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good. If thy Enemy hunger, give him Bread; if he thirst, give him Drink: so shalt thou heap Coals of Fire upon his Head; i. e. thereby he will be soften'd, overcome, and won over by thee.* Now tho these things are not easy to Flesh and Blood, but quite against the grain, yet they speak forth the Goodness of the Divine Nature, with the Excellency of the Christian Religion (which admits of nothing dishonourable to God, or prejudicial to Men, but commands every thing pleasing to the one, and profitable to the other) and therefore the more diligent we should be in the doing of them. Having thus shewn about what things Christian Diligence is to be imploy'd, I now pass to

The last thing I propos'd to do, which is to offer some Arguments to engage every one of us to the Practice of Christian Diligence; which, as you have heard, is so conducive to our Comfort here, and Happiness hereafter; with which I'll conclude.

The First is taken from the many and great *Inconveniences* and *Mischiefs* which proceed from Sloth, and the want of Christian Diligence. By Idleness we cherish an evil and sinful Frame in the Soul, and become guilty before God. *Plato* is reported to say, that by this Concupiscence and Luxury is kindled; and our blessed Saviour tells us, that *while Men slept, the Enemy sow'd Tares.* 'Tis a Season which we put into the Devil's Hand, to forge his Design against, and to fix his Temptations on us. Hereby we bring all into Disorder, as the wise Man observes; *I went by the Field of the Slothful, and the Vineyard*

*Vineyard of the Man void of Understanding; and Prov. 24.
lo 'twas grown over with Thorns, and Nettles co- 30, 31.
ver'd the Face thereof, and the Stone Wall was broken
down. Also by much Slothfulness the Building decays, Eccles. 10.
and thro the Idleness of the Hand the House drops 18.
thro. Hereby we bring Poverty and Misery on
our selves; and how should it be otherwise, since
the Hand which should be at the Plow is in the Prov. 19.
Bosom, and he who will not plow because 'tis 24. & 20.
cold, shall beg in Harvest, and have nothing? By 4.
Sloth we not only miss the Opportunity of get-
ting what we want, but we lose what we have.
Christians have not such a Stock but it may be
exhausted; for it's true, as well in Spirituals as
Temporals, that he who is slothful in his Work, is Prov. 18.9.
Brother to him who is a great Waster.*

In a word, Idleness makes the Body lank, the Spirit faint, and the Soul miserable; all which might happily have been prevented by Christian Diligence. But, Oh! for want thereof, and by playing fast and loose with God, how has our Peace been interrupted, and our Consciences wounded? How have our Graces been weaken'd, and the Holy Spirit griev'd? How have we lost the Soul-refreshing Smiles of God's Countenance, and heart-cheering Communion with him, and now go mourning all the Day, complaining that he hides his Face from us. Surely 'tis because we have been remiss, cold and lifeless in our Motions towards him, and not been diligent in serving of him.

Secondly, Consider that by Diligence in Christianity we shall obtain the Blessing, and be rendered happy: for, as Wisdom speaks, *The Hand Prov. 10.4.
of the Diligent makes Rich, his Thoughts tend to & 21. 5.
Plenteousness, and his Soul shall be made fat. & 13. 4.
How pleasant in Duty, and joyful in Expectation is the diligent Man! How abundant is his Comfort*

from the Testimony of his own Conscience and his Confidence towards God! To what height of Grace does he arrive, to what pitch of Holiness does he attain, who with *St. Paul*, presses forwards towards the Mark! What Settledness of State does he acquire, and how thro the Exercise of his Senses does he taste the Sweetness of Communion with God his Saviour! With what a Facility does he dispatch Duty, and bring forth a Progeny of Good Works, the clearest and best Evidences of his Faith!

Diligence will make us fruitful in Righteousness, peaceable in our selves, and procure us Esteem and Approbation both with God and Man; for *he who is diligent in his Business, shall stand before Kings, and not before mean Men*. Nay, such is the Power and Excellency of Diligence, that by it much Work is done in little time: There is nothing so difficult but constant Labour will attain to it, and conquer all Opposition which hinders the Accomplishment of it.

But the want of Industry is the true Reason why so many Christians do so little, and fall so far short of those Degrees in Knowledg and Holiness, which otherwise they might have come to: *as our Apostle tells the Hebrews, that for the time they might have been Teachers of others, and yet had need that some should teach them the first Principles of the Oracles of God*. He tells 'em, 'twas owing to their Dullness that they grew not to Maturity and full Age, but continu'd in the State of *Babes*, having not their Senses exercis'd by use to discern Good and Evil.

Thirdly, Consider that Diligence in our Christian Calling will clothe us with a Lustre and Excellency above others: The more we excel in Holy Emulation, the nearer we come to, and with the more Life resemble the most noble and excellent

cellent Creatures. How vigorous is the Sun in its Course, which the Royal Prophet compares to a *strong Man rejoicing to run his Race!* No-thing short of Almightyneſs can ſtop his Motion. And the Angels, far more glorious Creatures, who can conceive of their Swiftneſs and Celerity! How active and ſpeedy are they in every part of their holy Employment! They are ſaid to have ſix Wings, and with two they fly, intimating to us their Swiftneſs in Obedience. There are no Loiterers before the Throne.

Yea, ſuch Chriſtians as excel in Diligence are moſt like God and Chriſt, whom to be like is our trueſt Honour and greateſt Happineſs. In Creation God ceaſ'd not to work, till he finiſh'd the ſame in ſuch perfect Order as that he pronounc'd every part of it very good, and becoming the Wiſdom and Excellency of ſuch an Architect to produce. Accordingly our Lord Jeſus *went up and down doing good*, denoting his Conſtancy and Unweariedneſs therein. As 'tis Man's Privilege to have the beſt Precedents for his Rule, and pureſt Patterns for his Imitation, ſo 'tis his Commendation and Honour to come up to, and to the life reſemble 'em; which Chriſtians can never do but by Diligence and Activity in Religion and Godlineſs, wherein they are call'd upon to *be Followers of God as dear Children*. And our Bleſſed Saviour aſſures 'em, that if here they *follow him in the Regeneration*, he will advance 'em to inherit Honour, and to poſſeſs a Throne of Glory hereafter.

A Fourth thing which may engage us to Chriſtian Diligence, is the *Bleſſedneſs* of the End whereto it tends. For if it be rightly apply'd, ſincere and conſtant, 'twill be recompens'd with the great Bleſſings of Assurance here, and Glory hereafter: *Wherefore* (ſays Pe-

ter) the rather, Brethren, give all Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure; for so an abundant Entrance shall be minister'd to you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What can be more plain to the purpose, than that Diligence and Industry in
 1 Tim. 4.8 Virtue and Godliness (which has the Promise of the Life which now is, and of that which is to come) shall furnish the pious Man with the Comforts of Assurance here, and crown him with Happiness for ever? For the word SO refers directly to Diligence before exhorted to, as that which qualifies a Christian for Entrance into the Celestial Region.

But here let me tell you, a Christian does not merit or procure his Entrance by any Desert of his Diligence; and what Connection there is between Diligence and Assurance, Industry and Glory, is only of Grace; as St. Paul expressly
 Eph. 2. 8. teaches, saying, *By Grace ye are sav'd thro Faith, and that not of your selves.* Where a Reward becomes ours by Merit, the Service which we perform must bear a full Proportion of Worth and Value to the Reward; but here's none: and if there were a Proportion, and the one were adequate to the other, still there's no reason to talk of Merit, because the Work is not done by our own Strength, but by the
 Phil. 2. 12. Strength of Christ; *God working in us both to will and to do according to his own Good Pleasure.*

In a word, when all is done, Heaven is the Purchase of Christ, and the Gift of God; and he who receives it not as a Gift, must for ever go without it. But tho Christ has purchas'd an Entrance into the Kingdom, and God will freely give it, yet 'tis fit he should give it to whom, and in what way best pleases him. And has he not stated and settled the way in which
 he

he will give Heaven as a Reward, viz. next to Faith in Christ, and applying his Righteousness, the way of sincere Diligence in Christianity? He bestows the Recompence not for Diligence, nor without it, but in the Use of it; as the Psalmist well expresses it, *In keeping thy Commandments there is great Reward.* A Ps. 119.11.

Fifth Consideration is the Shortness and Uncertainty of our Time in this World, to do so great a Work as insuring the Happiness of a glorious and eternal Reward. Were we sure of living as long as *Methuselah*, we might have some colour for suspending Diligence in Religion till another Century of our Age, tho there would be no wisdom in our so doing. But since our Time is short at longest, and its Uncertainty such, that no Man can promise himself a Morrow, what wretched Folly is it to trifle in the great Work of God and our Souls! Pro.

Tho God be so gracious thro Christ, as to accept of sincere Endeavours, yet how vexatious and cutting will a Reflection on our wilful Neglects be, when we come to die! What but this once made an *English Lady* to offer a world of Wealth for an Inch of Time! And a virtuous Gentlewoman of my Acquaintance, upon my entring the Chamber to visit her in her last Sickness, cry'd out in the Bitterness of her Soul, saying, *O Sir, I must not live, and I dare not die.* 'Tis certain that nothing can arm Death with Terroures, and make him more formidable and dreadful in his March towards us, than a Consciousness of mispent time.

Let us then apply the little Time before us, not to the Gratification of our sensual Appetites, but for glorifying God, in whose hands our Time is. And a due Thoughtfulness of the Uncertainty of it, will excite and quicken us Ps. 31.15.

Deut. 32.
29.

to improve it for the best purposes ; as we may learn from that affectionate Option of the Lord for Israel, saying, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* Had they done this, it would have taken 'em from their brutish Courses, and engag'd 'em with Diligence to their God and Duty. This was the Improvement which Moses made of that great Mortality which he saw in the Wilderness, when so many thousands were suddenly cut off, and unexpectedly sent in their Rebellions to Corruption ; he prays to God, who had so signaliz'd his Justice, and display'd his Power and Wrath on the wilful Wasters of Time and Grace, that they who were spar'd might learn to employ their Time better, saying, *So teach us to number our days, as to apply our Hearts to Wisdom.*

Again, Consider that as your Time is short, so your Work for Heaven and Glory will not last long. An end will quickly be put to our praying and watching, to our striving and working, to our fighting and bleeding. The Race will quickly be run, and our wearisome Marches will soon be over. Death puts an end to the golden Season and Opportunity for Diligence. There's no working in the Grave, which waits for us ; therefore Solomon excites us, from the Shortness of our Time, that *what-
Eccl. 9. 10. ever our Hand finds to do, we do it with our might ; because there is no Work, Knowledge, Device, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whither we are going.*

The last thing which I'll propose for engaging us to Christian Diligence, is, how void of Apology we shall be left, and how inexcusable we shall be in the great Day, if we neglect it. Can we imagine that God takes no notice of our wretched trifling with him, and that he

will never call us to an Account ; or if he does, that 'twill be as easy to impose upon him as 'tis upon Men, who can only judg according to Appearance, and do often take Shadows for Substance ? But *be not deceiv'd, God is not mock'd: Gal.*

What a Man sows, that shall he reap.

Sirs, Believe it, God will bring us to Judgment ; when every Mask shall be pull'd from our Faces, and hypocritical Garments shall be rent from our Shoulders ; when we must be set in a true light before God, Angels and Men ; when 'twill be demanded, why such a Sin was not subdu'd, why such a Temptation was not resisted, why such a Duty was not perform'd, and why Diligence therein was so neglected ? What can you offer for your selves ? Come, bring forth your strong Reasons.

We may plead ; but alas ! what shall we urge *Rev. 2. 21.* for our Excuse ? Shall we plead Want of Time ? How false and vain is that, since we were not diligent in the time which we had ! Shall we plead our natural Proneness to Sin and Sloth ? That's what we chose and cherish'd. 'Twill appear our Fault, but no Excuse, as we did not strive and pray against it. Shall we urge Weakness, and Want of Grace ? How fruitless will that be, when 'twill appear that we neglected to use what we had, and refus'd Grace in the frequent Tenders and Offers of it ? Shall we plead our Privileges, the external Services which we have done, and the Works which we have wrought in Christ's Name ? What will those avail, tho we could *cast Devils* out of others, whilst we nourish'd *Mat. 7. 22,* a slothful Frame in our selves, and were *Workers 23.* of Iniquity ?

Finally, Shall we venture to arraign the ever-blessed God, and charge Christ with being

a hard Master, extreme and rigorous? This will not only be vain, but horribly impious: for God reaps not where he has not sown. He requires not the Improvement of more than we have. 'Twas the Want of this which excluded the foolish Virgins from entring, and sent the unprofitable Servant bound hand and foot to the Confines of outer Darknes.

Mat. 25. 9,
10, 11,
26—30.

O, Sirs, consider how wretched our State will be, when upon a fair Trial we are found guilty, and can offer nothing in our own Defence, but what will appear false and fruitless; and so come to be cast in Judgment, and thereon to be separated for ever from the Glory of Heaven (a Happiness propos'd to Christians to make 'em diligent) and sent away with Troops of Devils and reprobate Men, to lie down in the Miserys of an easeless and restless State in the Infernal Lake, and to inhabit the Regions of everlasting Burnings; and this for want of Christian Diligence, which we have shewn you is not a vain and fruitless thing, but shall be blest'd with Assurance here, and Happiness hereafter.

To conclude; That you may escape that Misery, and obtain this Happiness, we, after our Apostle, earnestly desire that everyone of you do shew the same Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope to the end; that ye be not slothful, but Followers of them who thro Faith and Patience inherit the Promises. And that you may do this, we'll not cease to pray, with him, That the God of Peace, who brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, would make you perfect in every Good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, thro Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Heb. 13.
20, 21.

F I N I S.

